

**Re-storying identities:
Young women's narratives of teenage
parenthood and educational support**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

in the University of Canterbury

by

Jenny Hindin Miller

University of Canterbury

2012

To my beautiful mokopuna, Sofia Grace and Mila Hope,
and to any other grandchildren who may bless my older age with their delightful presence.

“Children are the most precious treasure a community can possess, for in them are the promise and the guarantee of the future. They bear the seeds of the character of future society which is largely shaped by what the adults constituting the community do or fail to do with respect to children. They are a trust no community can neglect with impunity. An all-embracing love of children, the manner of treating them, the quality of the attention shown them, the spirit of adult behavior toward them – these are all ... vital ...”

From the Baha’i Writings (The Universal House of Justice, 2000)

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	7
Abstract.....	8
Chapter One: Introducing Mandy, the research question, and the structure of the thesis .	10
Mandy's story.....	10
The historical context of my study	12
My research question	12
The organisation of my thesis	16
Chapter Two: A review of the discursive contexts of teenage parenthood and some educational responses	22
Part One:.....	25
What the research literature says about teenage parents	25
I: Characteristics and outcomes of teenage parenthood	25
II: The construction of the 'problem' of teenage parenthood	28
III: Implications of negative constructions of teenage parenthood	34
Part Two:	38
Education initiatives to support teenage parents	38
I: Initiatives in Britain	38
II: Initiatives in the United States.....	39
III: Studies of successful North American education programmes for teenage parents	41
Part Three:	46
The New Zealand context.....	46
I: Teen Parent Units.....	46
II: New Zealand research on Teen Parent Units and their students	48
III: The School for Teenage Parents in my study.....	55
Chapter Three: Theoretical framing of the study: A “universe of discourse”	63
I: My theoretical 'whakapapa' or genealogy.....	63
II: Epistemologies underpinning the work of the Teen Parent School	65
III: Theoretical framing of this study	68
Social Constructionism	71
Biographical and human development theories of identity.....	76

Culturally-responsive pedagogical theories	80
Māori culturally responsive pedagogical theories	81
Chapter Four: Narrative methodology, research design and the analysis of data	86
I: What did I want to investigate?	86
II: Qualitative approaches	87
III: The research design	94
IV: Ethical considerations	104
V: Analysis of data	109
VI: Issues of trustworthiness, rigour and validity	118
Foreword to Chapters Five to Seven: “Tell me your story”	119
Chapter Five: The narrative framing of child- and teenage-hood	120
Part One: Formative stories of childhood, schooling, and being a teenager	122
I: Childhood and family life	122
Six little girls at home	122
Andy’s story	124
II: Schooling	131
Six little girls at school	131
Kate’s story	134
III: Drugs and alcohol	138
Six girls ‘at play’	138
Tatiana’s story	140
Part Two: Pregnancy and parenthood as a turning point in the fashioning of identities..	149
I: Familial, personal and social responses to the young women’s pregnancies	150
II: Pregnancy within the context of hopes and aspirations.....	155
III: Pregnancy and parenthood as a turning-point in the fashioning of identities	157
Chapter Six: The role of the School for Teenage Parents in the refashioning of students’ identities	163
Part One: School ‘reports’	167
Reasons for enrolling at Pumanawa Young Parents College	167
Andy’s story of Pumanawa College.....	169
Kate’s story of Pumanawa College	174

Tatiana's story of Pumanawa College.....	180
Conclusion.....	186
Part Two: Kaupapa whānau: The College and Early Childhood Centre as family	189
I: Ako: Culturally responsive teaching and learning relationships	191
Whānaungatanga	191
Commitment to academic success.....	194
Understanding of individual learning needs.....	197
Being treated like an adult.....	199
II: The whānau support of the Early Childhood Centre	201
The benefits of having the children on-site	202
Whanāungatanga	203
Programme structures that supported parenting.....	205
III: Relationships with the other young women at the College	206
IV: Holistic support for the young women as parents, learners and young people.....	209
The role of Support Workers.....	209
The provision of transport	211
The provision of food	212
V: Academic achievements at the College.....	213
VI: Pumanawa College as a site of transformation of identities	218
Chapter Seven: Negotiating the 'real world': Young women's storied identities within the contexts of their 'present' lives	221
I: The challenge of transition from the College to life in the 'outside world'	222
II: Six young women today: Negotiating prevailing discourses of 'success'	223
III: The young women's positive construction of their identities as teenage parents	246
Chapter Eight: Concluding remarks	251
The context of my study.....	252
My findings	253
The implications of these findings	256
Appendices.....	262
Appendix A: Ethical approval letter	262
Appendix B: Information sheets and consent forms	263

Appendix C: Interview schedules	273
Appendix D: Vision Statement of the School for Teenage Parents	276
Reference List.....	277

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to many people, without whom this research study would have been difficult to complete.

First and foremost, I would like to thank all of my research participants, and in particular, the wonderful young women who shared their time and their stories with such open generosity. I would also like to thank all of the delightful and inspiring young parents and children with whom I have had the privilege to work over many years. And I would like to thank the dedicated staff of the Teen Parent School for their belief in the value of their work, and for their commitment to supporting the young parents and their children to achieve to their highest potential.

A number of people have been involved in my PhD journey and have added their own individual qualities to its unexpected twists and turns. I would like to acknowledge the enthusiastic support and encouragement of Professor Niki Davis, the practical guidance of Associate Professor Judith Duncan, the passion and honesty of Senior Lecturer Kathleen Quinlivan, and the clarity and generosity of spirit of Associate Professor Judi Miller. The wisdom and enthusiasm of Adjunct Emeritus Professor Bridget Somekh inspired me in the challenging early months of my study. I would also like to thank the PhD community which, for me, was shattered by the Christchurch earthquakes. In particular, I would like to thank Marilyn Raffensperger, Louise Tapper, and Sorada Wattana for their friendship and support.

And finally I would like to acknowledge the loving support and encouragement of my family, who are the very core of my being and the centre of my universe. Firstly my adult children, Rebecca and Isaac, who in their different ways delight, inspire and engage me, my son-in-law, Andrew and my beautiful little granddaughters, Sofia Grace and Mila Hope. I would like to acknowledge my good and dear parents, Joan and Jack Hindin, whose commitment to education, and to excellence in all things, moulded my being. To my sister and brother, Debbie and Philip, my niece, Nikau and my sister-in-law, Yuying, thank you for your encouragement and belief. And finally, my gratitude goes to my wonderful husband, Grant, whose patient, skilled, wise and loving encouragement and support for everything that I do makes any challenge seem achievable. I am looking forward, with anticipation, to the next steps in our life journey.

Abstract

Teenage parenting is widely constructed in prevailing research and public discourse as a social problem, with poor outcomes for parent and child. Teenage parents are regarded as a drain on state funds, too young to parent well, and at high risk of social exclusion, both educationally and economically. This thesis proposes that teenage motherhood is a turning point in a young woman's life and identity, which can be an opportunity, rather than a problem, if there is adequate support for the mother and her child. It considers the role of a New Zealand School for Teenage Parents in providing this support.

Using qualitative narrative methodology, ten young women, six family members and nine other members of the School community were interviewed about their experiences of its culture and practices. Six of the young women were also interviewed to gather their life stories. Informed by the narrative understanding that we story our identities from the narrative possibilities available to us within the varied discursive contexts of our lives, this thesis draws on these life stories to explore how the young women storied the fashioning of their own identities as young women, as learners and as young parents. It presents their stories of childhood and family life, teenage-hood and schooling, pregnancy and parenthood, their experiences at the School for Teenage Parents, and their lives since leaving the School, in order to consider the role of the School in supporting the positive refashioning of their identities.

This thesis draws on social constructionist and narrative theories to interpret the storied contexts of the young women's lives, and the role these often constraining and difficult contexts played in the fashioning of their multiple identities. Māori culturally responsive pedagogical theories are also drawn on to interpret the culture of the School for Teenage Parents, and its attempts to provide a supportive and affirming family or whānau environment for its students, in order to offer them more positive narrative possibilities of self and identity as young women, as learners and as young parents.

We understand that the move toward narrative research in education has resulted in part from the long overdue recognition of the sound of silence, a sudden painful awareness of the extent to which human voices have been systematically excluded from the kinds of traditional research texts. These texts revealed disinterest, even disdain, for the experiences, and therefore the stories, of all sorts of school people, especially those from members of social categories whose marginalization has extended far beyond the arena of educational research (Barone, 2007, p. 463).

Chapter One:

Introducing Mandy, the research question, and the structure of the thesis

Mandy's story

17 year-old Mandy, newly-referred by her Work and Income case manager, sits awkwardly in my office at the Young Parents College, her 4 week old son asleep in the stroller beside her. I am attempting to engage her by offering her a cup of warm Milo and admiring her little baby, Akiwa. She is apprehensive about this new and unfamiliar environment and has several tentative questions:

"What are the other girls like? Are they friendly?"

I reassure her that all of them were new at the College at some stage and felt shy and uncertain as she does but that it is a very welcoming place and quite different from 'ordinary' school. The teachers are called by their first names and we do lots of interesting activities and outings, as well as 'normal' school work. The children love the childcare environment and make many little friends.

"I didn't like school," she offers. "I left in Year 10."

"What have you been doing since then?" I ask.

"I was working at the supermarket and then I got pregnant and had to stop when I was about 7 months. I was pretty tired most of the time and I couldn't fit properly at the checkout."

"Why do you want to come back to school?" I ask.

"I haven't got any qualifications, you know, and I want something better for Akiwa. I want to get my NCEA and get a good job and good pay so that I can give him a better life than what I had. I don't want to be on the benefit."

Mandy is a composite representation, drawn from conversations with several hundred teenage mothers over a period of fifteen years. I met many young women, such as Mandy, when they visited the Teen Parent School to discuss their enrolment.

‘Mandy’ was apprehensive when she first visited the Teen Parent School, because of her negative experience of conventional school. Believing herself to be a learner of limited capacity, she had intensely disliked high school and had ‘dropped out’, without gaining any school qualifications. Mandy was lacking in personal confidence and, like many of the young women with whom I worked, was apprehensive about meeting the other girls at the School. In common with many teenage parents, Mandy was already working (in an unskilled job), when she became pregnant, and her pregnancy was the impetus for her changing perspective on the value and importance of educational qualifications. Her long-term goal was to get a ‘good job’ in order to give ‘Akiwa’ a better life than she herself had experienced.

I created ‘Mandy’ when I was writing my research proposal, and hadn’t yet interviewed my participants. I decided to introduce the ‘story’ of my meeting with Mandy, at the beginning of my thesis, because I wanted to use an embodied representation which portrayed aspects of many of the teenage parents with whom I had worked. I felt that it was important for readers to meet a young parent, real or imagined, before they were introduced to the research literature about teenage parents. This would give the statistics of quantitative research, which underpin much of the prevailing negative discourse about teenage parents, a human presence and a speaking voice. In other words, I have used narrative in an attempt to personalise the research and to engage the reader, in a way that quantitative studies are unable to do.

Later, in my presentation of my research findings when I share the stories of real young women, I do not argue that they are necessarily representative of other young mothers. Each has a personal story with its own unique integrity. However, for stories to be understood by others, they must draw upon familiar narrative conventions and persona, and, in this way, every story, whilst uniquely personal, is also universal (Bruner, 2002; Du Plessis, Higgins, & Mortlock, 2004, p. 285).

My gathering together of the stories of a number of young parents, in this thesis, has the effect of creating a form of collective tale, with the potential to shift the negative attitudes of wider society, which have served to silence and marginalise teenage parents (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 55; Plummer, 2001). This is one of the underlying purposes of my study.

The historical context of my study

In 1996, I had set up a small study group, in response to a request from two teenage mothers, with whom I was working as a Teen Parent Support Worker. This request initiated a journey whose outcome was the evolution of New Zealand's second School for Teenage Parents, and the first licensed Early Childhood Centre, attached to a Teen Parent School. It drew me and my growing number of colleagues from other nascent Teen Parent Schools into a bureaucratic labyrinth, in our struggle to secure realistic and consistent funding from the Ministry of Education. And it afforded me the privilege of walking alongside numerous young parents, mostly young mothers, as they began their own journeys of discovery as new parents and as 'second-chance' students in an educational alternative, set up specifically to support them to succeed. It is the stories of some of these young parents that I share in this study; and it is the Teen Parent School which provides an important cultural context and framework for these stories.

My research question

My research question investigates how the experiences of 'early' parenthood and of attendance at a School for Teenage Parents supported the positive refashioning of the identities of ten young women. The study's particular focus is on the young women's identities as learners, as young parents and as young women. All of the young women had been students of the Teen Parent School, at which I worked.

I include here an extract from one of my research journals, in which I reflect upon some of the reasons for my decision to undertake research into the lives of a group of teenage parents, who had attended the School for Teenage Parents.

Research Journal entry: 2 Feb 2011

Reflection on why I am doing this research

I decided to research the Teen Parent School where I had worked because I felt that it had positively changed the lives of many of the young women and children who had attended it over the years. I wanted to put a positive piece of research into the research discourse on teenage parents; I wanted to share the wonderful stories of some of these young parents; I wanted to give their previously-silenced voices primacy; and I wanted to look at the distinguishing features of an educational alternative, which was doing some things

differently from the 'mainstream' in its work with a group of young people who were mostly alienated by 'the system'. I also wanted to do something with the body of knowledge and experience I had built up over the years of my work with young parents at the School. When I retired from this role at the end of 2008, I felt it was important to not just walk away with that body of knowledge and experience but to do something that might enhance the opportunities of other teenage parents to re-engage with education, as well as making a contribution to the work of Teen Parent Schools, and the wider field of education. This helped me in making my decision to retire from something into which I'd invested so much of my life.

This journal entry demonstrates my personal commitment to supporting the access of teenage parents to education, and to improving their educational experiences. I am not an impartial researcher, and have been a passionate advocate, over many years, for the rights and unique support needs of teenage parents and their children.

How I conducted my study

When I began my research journey, at the start of 2009, it was my intention to investigate in what ways the Teen Parent School had influenced the lives of former students.

I decided to conduct my study through a number of semi-structured interviews with young parents who had attended the School for Teenage Parents for two or more years, and were still enrolled at some time between 2005 and 2008. In order to investigate its influence on their lives, these interviews would focus on the young women's lives before, during, and after their enrolment at the School. I asked questions about their formative experiences of child- and teenage-hood, family life and schooling. I asked them about their hopes and aspirations, and about the circumstances surrounding their pregnancies and their decisions to return to school. I explored those aspects of the Teen Parent School perceived by the young parents as being supportive of their learning, parenting and personal growth, as well as those aspects that they felt were unsupportive, or could have been improved. And I asked the young women what they were doing 'now' in their personal and working lives, and what, if any, longer term influence they felt the School had had on their lives, and their future aspirations. I also interviewed a small group of other young mothers, in order to check the preliminary analysis of my findings, as well as six 'significant others' selected by my young women participants. And I interviewed three of the

School's teachers and six of its early childhood teachers, to gather their perspectives on the culture and practices of the School. I intended to include vignettes of community life and experience at the Teen Parent School, as well as intimate stories from the lives of the teenage parents, and some of my own story as a former Director of the School.

Because I was interested in exploring the life experiences of my participants, I decided to use a narrative methodological approach to the gathering and analysis of my data. Narrative research is a qualitative methodology which draws on our human propensity for story-telling in order to access the lived experiences and meaning-making of research participants (Andrews, et al., 2008; Bruner, 2002; Cortazzi & Jin, 2006; Plummer, 2001; Riessman, 2008b; Trahar, 2006). It was my plan to structure my research findings chronologically, in a form of reconstructed life story of each young woman, to examine her life experiences before, during, and after the College.

As my interviews with the young women progressed, and I transcribed and analysed my data, it became apparent that one of the central themes, emerging from the data, was about how the young women's identities had been fashioned and refashioned in the many contexts of their lives in ways which either constrained or enhanced their life hopes and opportunities. It was the importance of this theme which eventually caused me to reframe my research question to consider how the experiences of 'early' parenthood and of attendance at a School for Teenage Parents had supported the positive refashioning of the identities of my participants. Because it was only the stories of the young women which could speak directly to their self-making, I found it necessary to exclude from my thesis most of the (substantial) body of data collected from other participants. I did this with some reluctance.

The significance of this study

From my experience of working with young parents, over a number of years, and from my subsequent reading of academic research when I commenced my study, I was well-aware of the widespread discursive construction of the 'problem' of teenage parenthood. Much of this negative discourse is underpinned by quantitative health-based research, which defines a multitude of negative outcomes for both mother and child (Dickson, Sporle, Rimene, & Paul, 2000; Fergusson & Woodward, 2000; Pogarsky, Thornberry, & Lizotte, 2006; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009; Woodward, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2001; Woodward, Friesen, Horwood, & Fergusson, 2009). And much of it is framed within changing social discourses about 'acceptable

motherhood', the normative age of childbearing, concepts of social deviance and social exclusion, and neo-liberal discourses of autonomy and independence (Allen & Osgood, 2009; Breheny & Stephens, 2007a; Bullen, Kenway, & Hey, 2000; Cherrington & Breheny, 2005; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Kehily, 2007; Lesko, 2001; Scholl, 2007; Wilson & Huntington, 2006).

It was apparent that the voices and lived experiences of real young parents were mostly silent in this research and public discourse, and I intended this study to provide a forum in which some of these voices could be heard (Barone, 2007, p. 463). As my study progressed, I also became aware that the majority of the research on teenage parenthood had been undertaken by researchers with limited, if any, experience of working with this group of young people. As a 'participant' researcher, I felt uniquely placed to undertake this study. I was aware, from personal experience, of the richly complex stories of the lives of many young parents, and I regarded the close relationships formed with the participants in my study, over a number of years, as an advantage in seeking access, and giving voice, to their narratives of experience.

As I proceeded with my reading, I also investigated research about educational programmes for teenage parents in other parts of the world, primarily the United States and Britain (Amin, Browne, Ahmed, & Sato, 2006; Brosh, Weigel, & Evans, 2007; Burdell, 1995; Ducker, 2007; Hallman, 2007; Harris & Franklin, 2009; Harrison, Shacklock, Angwin, & Kamp, 2004; Hosie, 2002; Hunter, 2007; Kelly, 2003; Lall, 2007; Madhavan & Thomas, 2005; Ripple, 1994; Roxas, 2008; Scholl, 2007; Seitz & Apfel, 1999; SmithBattle, 2006; Zachry, 2005). It became apparent that international data was somewhat equivocal about the effectiveness of some of these alternative educational options for teenage parents.

Although New Zealand research about teenage parents was increasingly drawing its participants from Teen Parent Units - our localised response to the educational disengagement of young parents (Charteris, 2005; Collins, 2005, 2010; Cubey, 2009; Hill, 2005; Johnson & Denny, 2007; Paki, 2002; Patterson, Forbes, Peace, & Campbell, 2010; Poelzleitner, 2007; Taylor, 2002; Wylie, 2009), there was little research into the influence of these schools on the lives of their students, other than a review of 'best practice' commissioned by the Ministry of Education (Carlisle & Gibbs, 2008). Again, because of my own work in this field, I felt well-placed to undertake this research, and hoped that it might offer a window into an interesting educational alternative, which appeared to be achieving positive academic and other life outcomes with its students.

As I searched for relevant theoretical frameworks with which to frame the analysis of my data about the role of the School in refashioning its students' identities, I discovered Māori culturally responsive pedagogies (Bishop, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009; Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Macfarlane, 1997; Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh, & Bateman, 2007; Macfarlane, Glynn, Waiariki, Penetito, & Bateman, 2008; Macfarlane & New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2004, 2007), and Durie's (1998) theories of human development. These theories spoke with most relevance to both the local context of my study and the data from the young women participants about the School's culture.

New Zealand indigenous epistemologies articulate the important role of holistic and affirming cultural pedagogies in enhancing the achievements and sense of belonging of underachieving and alienated students, in the conventional school system. By drawing on Māori culturally responsive pedagogical theories to frame the culture and practices of the School for Teenage Parents, I hoped to showcase a positive and effective model of teaching practice, in an alternative school setting. It was also my hope that this model would have something to offer to those teachers seeking to improve schools and the schooling experiences of other marginalised segments of the student population.

And finally, it was my intention that, by drawing upon the positive stories told by the young women about their identities as teenage parents, this would challenge and contest the prevailing negative discourse about teenage parenthood, and would serve to reframe this phenomenon as an 'opportunity' rather than a 'problem', provided there is adequate and holistic support for parent and child, such as that provided by the School for Teenage Parents.

The organisation of my thesis

This thesis is composed of eight chapters, four appendices and a reference list.

Chapter One introduces the thesis and its underlying purposes.

Chapter Two explores the "autobiography" of my research question (Boden, Kenway, & Epstein, 2005, p. 42) by examining what the research literature has to say about the characteristics and outcomes of teenage parenthood, from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. I discuss the construction of teenage parenthood in public, political and academic discourse as a social problem, with several defining features: social deviance, welfare

dependency and social exclusion; and I consider how this negative discourse affects the identities of teenage parents. I also look at a range of educational initiatives for teenage parents, which have been developed in the United States and Britain, and discuss New Zealand's unique response to the learning (and other) needs of teenage parents, in the form of Teen Parent Units. And finally, I relate the story of the Teen Parent Unit which is the context of this study.

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical influences and frameworks upon which I have drawn, in my own work with teenage parents. These include the influence of feminist thought and of spiritual frameworks, including my commitment to the Baha'i Faith.

I discuss the role of social theory; and identify the theoretical frameworks with which I have framed the analysis of my data. These include the use of social constructionism to frame the cultural contexts which have fashioned the identities of my young women participants; human development theories, such as those of Durie, to frame the holistic work of the School; and models of culturally-responsive pedagogical practice, described by Macfarlane and Bishop, which seemed to 'speak' most articulately to the culture and practices of the Teen Parent School.

I outline features of social constructionism, including its focus on the role of prevailing discourses which underpin those aspects of life and culture that can be 'read' for meaning (Burr, 1995; Neimeyer, 1998). This includes those discourses which define people according to age, gender, social class and ethnicity; which sustain conventional schooling practices; and which 'problematise' teenage parents, all of which are the subject and context of my study.

I discuss how social constructionists posit the fragmented and multiple self as constructed through "a process of claiming and resisting ... identities on offer within the various prevailing discourses" (Burr, 1995, p. 76).

I outline indigenous theoretical understandings of the holistic self, and of personal and family well-being, found in Durie's (1998) *whare tapa whā* model (the four-walled house). And I discuss those Māori pedagogies which articulate the importance of affirming cultural identities, within a nurturing and respectful educational environment, in order to support underachieving students to experience a sense of belonging and educational success.

Chapter Four explains why and how I have approached the collection of data for this study, and how I have analysed and presented these data, by using narrative methodological approaches. This methodology seemed ‘fit for purpose’ because of my interest in the life experiences of my participants, and my epistemological understanding that we live storied lives, and use narratives to make sense of our lives and identities (Andrews, et al., 2008; Bruner, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Du Plessis, et al., 2004; Josselson, 2011; Lips-Wiersma, 1999; Middleton, 1993; Plummer, 2001; Riessman, 2008b; Somekh & Lewin, 2005; Trahar, 2006; Watson, 2006).

Chapters Five, Six and Seven present my research findings. Drawing on the stories of ten young women, I explore some of the “identities on offer” in the contexts of their lives, and consider how the young women negotiated the narrative possibilities of these contexts. **Chapter Five** examines the often constraining influence on the young women’s identities of personal, familial and cultural narratives of childhood and family life, schooling and teenage-hood. It culminates with their narratives of pregnancy and parenthood which, despite widespread social disapproval, served as turning points in their lives and identities, and encouraged them to return to school to gain qualifications which they believed would provide their children with ‘a better life’.

Chapter Six explores the role of the School for Teenage Parents in supporting the positive refashioning of the identities of the young women, by offering them different storied identities as ‘good’ parents, as successful learners and as young women, with positive and hopeful futures. It explores how these narrative possibilities supported the young women to resist and reject the limiting and negative identities of society’s prevailing discourse about teenage parents, and to see beyond the constraining influence of their earlier life experiences.

Chapter Seven looks at how the young women frame their identities ‘today’, by locating themselves within prevailing neo-liberal discourses of ‘success’. It considers the longer term effect of the School’s narratives of identity, particularly with regard to the young women’s engagement in further education, their employment opportunities and choices, their relationships and family life. It also considers the young women’s attitudes to self, their hopes and aspirations for their futures, and their storied identities as teenage parents.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by considering some of the implications of my findings and some unforeseen dilemmas.

The use of key terms

I have used a number of terms in the thesis when discussing the role of narrative contexts in the fashioning of the identities of the young women who were my research participants. To assist the reader to understand my use of these terms, I have included the following list of definitions.

Discourses

Discourses are those bodies of knowledge that produce particular versions of reality that are taken as truth and frame how we understand the world (Burr, 1995; Youdell, 2011). I have used this term most commonly to describe the prevailing negative constructions (discourses) of the ‘problem of teenage parenthood’ (Ch 2, Pt 1). I have also used it when referring to dominant ‘discourses’ about aspects of life such as education, or what it means to be successful in today’s world (pp. 157, 222-245).

Discursive contexts

This term refers to how people speak about and discuss certain topics in particular contexts, such as family, school, and youth culture. I have used this term predominantly when referring to the social and discursive contexts in which the young women’s identities were fashioned (pp. 61, 135, 218).

Cultural narratives

These are stories which a group of people who are linked by a particular culture or cultural context tell about themselves. Examples include the positive stories which the young women told about their love for the Teen Parent School and its teachers, which were markedly different from the negative stories of mainstream school and teachers which prevail in today’s youth cultural contexts (p. 192). Other examples of cultural narratives include the aspirations of young people in New Zealand to have a “happy, stable and contented life” (p. 253).

Canonical narratives

These are narratives about how life ought to be lived in the culture – normative cultural expectations, such as the ‘good mother’, the safety and security of ‘home’ (p. 170), and the virtue of hard work (p. 227), which we draw upon in our personal narratives.

Narratives of self and identity

I have used this term to describe those personal stories of identity to which we are exposed primarily in our own families. I have also talked about the narrative identities available to the young women within the context of the Teen Parent School. For example, those young women who grew up in families where their parents had ‘dropped out’ of school with few qualifications experienced the constraining influence of these narrative possibilities of self and identity as learners (p. 162). The culture of success at the Teen Parent School provided these same young women with aspirational narrative possibilities about their identities as learners, as young women and as parents (pp. 171, 187, 193).

Counter narratives

I have used ‘counter narratives’ to describe those stories of self and identity with which the young women contested dominant discursive constructions of their identities, particularly as teenage parents (p. 220). I have also described the positive narrative possibilities of self and identity which the Teen Parent School offered the young women, within its own supportive culture of success, as counter narratives. These enabled the young women to resist and contest constraining familial narratives, as well as prevailing negative social discourse about their identities as, for example, ‘failed learners’ (p. 162).

Stories I have chosen not to tell

Although I gathered data about the experiences of the children of my participants, particularly with regard to the influence of the School’s Early Childhood Centre on their social and educational lives, I have chosen not to include this data, because of the limitations of space. I have also been unable to include much of the rich data gathered from teachers and other participants, to my great regret.

I was disappointed not to be able to include any young fathers in my study because the young men who had attended the Teen Parent School did not meet the selection criteria that I had established when choosing my participants, as outlined in Chapter Four.

There are many aspects of identities which I have chosen not to explore in this study, for a number of reasons. Because the theme of the fashioning and refashioning of identities emerged from my data and was not the specific focus of my research, I had not asked interview questions

about identities, other than those relating to sense of self, hopes for the future, ethnicity and teenage parenthood. As a result, I have little data to speak to many aspects of identity such as, for example, sex and gender. Although I did ask questions about how those of my participants who identified as Māori felt that the School had responded to their cultural needs, I was conflicted about including much of this data, because of my own ethnic identity as a Pākehā (non-Māori) New Zealander. I was aware that my (different) ethnicity would affect what my participants felt comfortable to share with me about their experiences as Māori students (Cram, 2001). For reasons outlined in Chapter Four, I was unable to overcome this problem by using a Māori interviewer.

Presentation style

This is a narrative thesis, and I have chosen to present its chapters as their own unfolding narrative (Gudmundsdottir, 1996, p. 295). In this way, I am honouring the many narrative contexts of my study – my conversations with the young women participants, my reflections on these conversations, our shared stories from our time together at the School for Teenage Parents, the young women's life stories and their construction of their identities in these stories, their trust in my sharing of their stories and in the power of these stories to advocate on behalf of other silenced young parents. I am also honouring my own love of language, my acknowledgement of the co-construction of knowledge that occurs not only in the telling but also in the reading of research, and my goal to make this thesis as accessible as possible. With all of this in mind, I wish you well with your reading.

Chapter Two:

A review of the discursive contexts of teenage parenthood and some educational responses

In this chapter, I explore the “autobiography” of my research question (Boden, et al., 2005, p. 42) by examining the discursive and educational contexts within which it is located. I consider what the research literature has to say about the characteristics and outcomes of teenage parenthood from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. I discuss the construction of teenage parenthood in public, political and academic discourse as a social problem with several defining features: social deviance, welfare dependency and social exclusion; and I consider how this negative discourse affects the identities of teenage parents. I look at a range of educational initiatives for teenage parents that have been developed in the United States and Britain, and discuss New Zealand’s response to the learning (and other) needs of this group of young people, in the form of Teen Parent Units. And finally, I relate the story of the Teen Parent Unit which is the specific context of this study.

Throughout, I cite extensively from New Zealand studies about teenage parents (as well as from international studies) because of their immediate relevance to the context of my own study. These citations include a number of quantitative New Zealand studies, many of which draw on substantial birth cohort data from the 1970s. These are widely-cited studies of the ‘risk factors’, characteristics and outcomes of teenage parenting, including trends and international comparisons, and the association between teenage pregnancy and female educational underachievement (Dickson, et al., 2000; Fergusson & Woodward, 2000; Woodward, Fergusson, et al., 2001; Woodward, et al., 2009). Their findings are largely consistent with quantitative studies from the United States and Britain.

Quantitative research has played a useful role in defining the territory of teenage pregnancy and parenting by providing an overview of numbers, trends and patterns, including such quantifiable characteristics as demographic and socio-economic circumstances and outcomes. This ‘big picture’ overview has been useful in informing social policy, and has enabled international comparisons to be made.

A limitation of much of the New Zealand quantitative research is that its data describe the characteristics of young women who were born in the 1970s, and may not be representative of more recent teenage parents. Also, because so many of the New Zealand (and international) quantitative studies are health-based and focus on ‘risk’ factors, they have served to ‘pathologise’ teenage parenthood, framing this phenomenon in public, political and academic discourse as negative and problematic (Cherrington & Breheny, 2005, p. 106). This has given impetus to a number of qualitative research studies, whose purpose is to ‘flesh out’ the impersonal statistical descriptions of quantitative research by exploring the understandings and lived experience of individual young parents and their children.

The remaining body of New Zealand research on teenage parents is primarily qualitative and falls into three broad categories:

1. Research framed by a social constructionist perspective, which uses discourse analysis to interpret the discursive construction of teenage parenthood as problematic, especially amongst health professionals. This body of work includes the research of Breheny and Stephens (2007a, 2007b), Cherrington and Breheny (2005), and Wilson and Huntington (2006).
2. Research which draws on the experiences of young parents, themselves, in an attempt to give voice to this previously-silenced group in public and academic discourse. This body of work includes a number of Masters theses, an influential PhD thesis and follow-up study (Collins, 2005, 2010), a review of the literature on characteristics of ‘best practice’ when working with teenage parents (Wylie, 2009), and several research articles. Examples are Lenihan (2003), Martis (2004), Payne (2005), Fraser (2006), Rawiri (2007) and Banks (2008). Rouch (2009) and Breiding-Buss (2007) have conducted research with young fathers, a group much-neglected in the research literature.
3. Educational research which draws its data from Teen Parent Units and their students. These studies also include several Masters theses, as well as Education Review Office reviews and an evaluation of educational ‘best practice’, commissioned by the Ministry of Education (Carlisle & Gibbs, 2008). Authors include Baragwanath (1997), Paki (2002), Taylor (2002), Hill (2005), Charteris (2005), Poelzleitner (2007) and Cubey (2009).

I cite a number of studies from the first two categories throughout this chapter. Some studies from the second and third categories are cited in more detail in the final section on New Zealand's Teen Parent Units. It is my observation that very few of the above-mentioned New Zealand studies have been undertaken by researchers who have worked extensively with teenage parents. This gives my study a point of difference.

One development with interesting implications for New Zealand research on teenage pregnancy and parenting is the increasing use of participants who attend Teen Parent Units. Collins, Payne, Fraser and Wylie all accessed a number of their participants from these accessible locations. Miscellaneous examples, not included above, are a narrative study of 'imagined futures' (Patterson, et al., 2010) and the Auckland School of Medicine's quantitative health and well-being study (Johnson & Denny, 2007). My own qualitative narrative study is also situated within the context of a Teen Parent Unit (or School for Teenage Parents).

I have divided the following review of the contexts of my research study into three parts. In Part One, I discuss the research literature on teenage parents, and the framing of teenage parenthood as problematic. In Part Two, I examine the responses of Britain and the United States to the educational needs of teenage parents. In Part Three, I consider the New Zealand context, and our unique response to the educational needs of teenage parents in the form of Teen Parent Units. And I examine the Teen Parent Unit which is the site of my study, in some detail.

Part One:

What the research literature says about teenage parents

UNICEF comparisons of teenage birth rates in twenty-eight OECD nations in 1998 revealed that New Zealand's rate of 29.8 births per 1000 was a close third behind that of the United Kingdom, which had 30.8 births per 1000. The United States had the highest rate at 52.1 births per 1000 (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006, p. 45). Statistics New Zealand identified New Zealand's under 20s birth rate in 2005 as 27.4 per 1000, second only to that of the United States, which had fallen to 40.4 per 1000 for the same year (Wylie, 2009, p. 38). The most recent statistics were found on The Ministry of Youth Development website (2011) which indicates that, by 2008, New Zealand's rate had increased to 33 births per 1000.

These statistics have generated much research activity in the United States and Britain, and, on a smaller scale, in New Zealand. This research has been dominated by the scientific discourse of quantitative health-based studies (Collins, 2005; Wilson & Huntington, 2006; Wylie, 2009), which present a bleak story about the life circumstances of teenage parents such as 'Mandy' in New Zealand and other OECD countries. Qualitative studies, drawing on interviews with young parents themselves to examine their perspectives on the experience of being a teenage parent, present a more positive and hopeful story.

I: Characteristics and outcomes of teenage parenthood

Quantitative research tells us that 'Mandy' is likely to have come from a family background of social and economic disadvantage, in which her own mother was also a teenage mother, her parents had left school without qualifications, her father was mostly absent, and there was a family history of adversity and instability. Mandy may have matured and been sexually active from an early age. She is likely to have been identified at school as having some conduct problems, and may have already 'dropped out' of school with few, if any, qualifications prior to becoming pregnant (Collins, 2005; Dickson, et al., 2000; Fergusson & Woodward, 2000; Woodward, Fergusson, et al., 2001).

Much New Zealand and international research on teenage pregnancy is also pessimistic about Mandy's, and her child Akiwa's, future prospects. These quantitative studies argue that early parenthood is likely to have far-reaching physical, social and emotional consequences for Mandy

and her son, including intergenerational socio-economic disadvantage, welfare dependence, marital difficulties, maternal depression and less effective and more punitive parenting practices (Johnson & Denny, 2007; Williams, McGee, O'Leary, & Knight, 1997; Woodward, 2003). Mandy may already have experienced antenatal complications, is likely not to have attended antenatal classes (Payne, 2005), and her baby may have been born pre-term and under average birth weight. These studies also suggest that Akiwa is likely to have more health problems, physical injuries, behavioural difficulties, language delays and educational under-achievement than children born to older first-time mothers. He is also more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system as he grows older (Hoffman & Maynard, 1997). In addition, the partners of teenage mothers are likely to be less reliable and supportive, both economically and emotionally, and to be more antisocial and abusive (Moffitt, 2002; Woodward, et al., 2009, p. 12). These young families appear to be caught in a spiral of intergenerational disadvantage from which it would seem difficult, if not impossible, to extricate themselves.

An alternative perspective has emerged in the research literature which challenges the causal relationship between teenage parenting and the negative outcomes mentioned above. Instead, this research has found a correlation between socio-economic disadvantage and teenage parenthood. This links the negative outcomes of teenage birth to the effects of such disadvantage rather than to the age of the mother, per se (Bissell, 2000; Hotz, McElroy, & Sanders, 2005; Smith-Battle, 2006; Wilson & Huntington, 2006). In their prospective study of a New Zealand birth cohort (1260 children born in Christchurch in 1977), Fergusson and Woodward (2000) found that there were significant associations between teenage pregnancy, educational under-achievement at high school, and a family background of social, educational and personal disadvantage. This 'association' makes it difficult to separate the negative effects of disadvantage from the outcomes of teenage pregnancy. As Principal Analyst for the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development, Collins (2010) has acknowledged, this remains a contested area in the quantitative research literature.

From my own experience of working in the field of teenage parenting for fifteen years, I repeatedly observed the relationship that exists between disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances, lower educational attainment and teenage births. A UNICEF (2001) report on

teenage births in rich nations put it this way: “... the young mother ... is more likely to drop out of school, to have no or low qualifications, to be unemployed or low paid ...” (p. 3).

A third or counter story, drawing on qualitative research methodologies and influenced by feminist researchers such as The Personal Narratives Group (1989), Middleton (1993), and Maynard and Purvis (1994), represents the perspectives of young parents themselves, and challenges the prevailing research and public discourse that teenage parenting is an implicitly undesirable, problematic event with universally poor outcomes. In their critique of the ‘pathologising’ of teenage parenthood, New Zealand qualitative researchers, Wilson and Huntington (2006, p. 70) cite Foucault, who argued that the perspectives of participants (such as young parents) represent “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task ... naive knowledges located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity”. Qualitative research gives voice to these “naive knowledges”.

When questioned about becoming a parent, young women and men are generally positive about the transformative impact of this experience on many aspects of their lives. These young parents “see themselves as making a success of their lives”, according to Wilson and Huntington (2006, p. 64). In her review of New Zealand and international research on teenage parenthood, Wylie (2009) reported that parenting can be “an incentive to do well and a catalyst for personal development and growth” (p. 20). Zachry (2005) and SmithBattle (2006) found that the American teenage mothers whom they studied were motivated by their pregnancies to resume their education, in order to gain qualifications to improve their employment prospects. And Collins (2010), in her report on resilience in teenage mothers, stated that:

while most of these young women would not recommend teenage motherhood, their stories show how giving birth as a teenager can be a strengthening experience that can help unlock potential and, with the appropriate resources and support, can result in good outcomes for themselves and their children (p. 50).

The contribution of these qualitative studies is that they flesh out the statistics of quantitative research findings with the personal stories of human experience. These accounts, the ‘naive knowledges’ referred to by Foucault, neither sit comfortably with, nor are readily discounted by,

prevailing scientific discourses which serve to reinforce negative constructions of teenage parenthood.

My study explores the life experiences of embodied young women as they (re)construct these experiences to themselves and to others. It investigates the transformative possibilities that educational support offers to young parents, whom society so often stigmatises as ‘drop-outs’, ‘welfare bludgers’, and ‘too young to be fit mothers’. Whilst I fully acknowledge the challenges and difficulties of young motherhood – I worked with young parents and their children for many years – my study locates itself within the counter story of teenage parenthood as a life-changing opportunity, rather than a problem.

II: The construction of the ‘problem’ of teenage parenthood

The flurry of research, public and political discourse about teenage pregnancy and parenthood has a relatively recent history, dating back some forty years. Prior to this, it was unmarried motherhood which drew the focus of public outrage and concern. It is paradoxical that the negative focus on teenage parenthood in Western discourse has coincided with a significant decrease in the actual numbers of teenage births since their peak in 1972 (Wilson & Huntington, 2006, p. 59).

Many factors have contributed to the construction of teenage parenthood as ‘problematic’ in recent years. These factors have political, historical, economic, cultural, and social inflections and are, therefore, varied across the OECD and developing nations (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006). They reflect changing cultural mores regarding traditional family structures, women’s roles, sexual morality, single and unwed parenthood, and normative adolescent and life-course biographies. They also contain decided undertones of class, age, race, and gender-based prejudices, which find their strongest expression in indignant public outbursts in the media. New Zealand researchers, Cherrington and Breheny (2005) ask “whether it is sexuality, non-marital childbearing, welfare acceptance, ethnicity, or class issues that are the basis of concerns over teenage pregnancy” (p. 107). From my own experience over many years, I would argue that it is a combination of all of these issues.

The discourse that is most relevant to my study, and to the experience of teenage parents in New Zealand, is that underpinning public attitudes and policy-making in the United States and Britain.

These countries feature prominently in the research literature because of their comparatively high rates of teenage pregnancy and parenthood, particularly amongst young women from ethnic minority groups and from backgrounds of social and economic disadvantage (Wylie, 2009, p. 19). Different discourses underpin the attitudes to teenage parenthood of other OECD countries, where, for a variety of reasons - more traditional attitudes to family and to women's roles in countries such as France, Italy and Japan, and a greater acceptance of adolescent sexuality coupled with a low acceptance of teenage parenthood in Scandinavian countries - the rates are significantly lower (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006, pp. 14-15).

Three perspectives dominate the prevailing discourse about teenage parenthood in the United States, Britain and New Zealand: teenage parenting as a form of social deviance, based upon the 'non-normative age' of teenage parents; teenage parenting as a burden on the state because of the dependence of young parents on welfare payments; and the more benign perspective of teenage parenting as a form of social exclusion, because most school-aged parents are 'out of' school and other forms of social engagement, and are therefore isolated from community support and from educational or employment opportunities (Allen & Osgood, 2009; Breheny & Stephens, 2007a; Bullen, et al., 2000; Daguerre & Nativel, 2006; Lesko, 2001; Wilson & Huntington, 2006). All of these perspectives have complex and interlinked nuances of class, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual morality. Because of this, my endeavour to explore these perspectives under different headings has resulted in some repetition.

Normative adolescent trajectories and the non-normative age of teenage childbearing

The argument regarding the non-normative age of teenage parenting relates to significant social, economic, political and cultural changes in 'developed' nations since the 1960s and 1970s, which have dramatically altered the traditional family structure in which teenage childbearing was not uncommon (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006, p. 2). One of these changes has been the increased emphasis on the importance of education, which has resulted in young people spending extended years in schooling. This has been exacerbated by recent rises in youth unemployment. Because of this, the period of adolescent dependency on family support has been protracted, and the assumption of 'adult' responsibilities such as parenthood has been significantly delayed. Teenage parenthood is therefore regarded as a form of social deviance from the current norm of 'slowed-down' adolescent development.

Lesko (2001) argues that a consequence of this ‘slowed-down development’ of young people, which keeps youths “socially young” (p. 216) and denies their sexual maturation, has been the discursive ‘production’ of the problem of ‘school-aged’ pregnancies. Lesko suggests that school-aged young women would choose not to become parents if their sexuality was acknowledged and they were provided with adequate sex education. Whilst there may be some logic to this argument, it is certainly not true of all pregnant school-aged young women and ignores the many complex reasons why they might choose to continue with their pregnancies. Lesko herself acknowledges the limitations of her study, in which her “emphasis on discourses ... downplays the particular understandings and experiences of identifiable, embodied youth” (p. 13), leaving these unexamined.

Changing roles of women and the increasing age of first childbearing

In recent decades, attitudes to the roles and opportunities available to young women have also been transformed from those prescribed by traditional family structures, and from limited educational and employment prospects. As a result, the normative and valued trajectory for young women, since the 1970s, has become that characterised by white, middle class, educated young women, who spend more years in education, pursue a career and become financially independent before choosing to have children (Allen & Osgood, 2009). A UNICEF (2001) report, cited by Daguerre and Nativel (2006, p. 5-6), proposes that within the context of these social changes:

teenage parenthood has come to be regarded as a significant disadvantage in a world which increasingly demands an extended education, and in which delayed childbearing, smaller families, two-income households, and careers for women are increasingly becoming the norm.

‘Kids having kids’

One consequence of this change in the role of women has been that the age of first parenting has increased from 23.65 years in 1964 to 30.2 years in 2009 ("Age-related infertility," 2009). The increase in the normative age of first childbearing has highlighted the youthfulness of teenage parents, resulting in such negative and judgemental monikers as “kids having kids” (Hoffman & Maynard, 1997). Young mothers, who were previously commonplace, are now regarded as ‘unfit’

parents simply because of their age. This, despite the great majority of teenage parents being in their late teens (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006).

This moralistic judgement is also compounded by the fact that over 90 per cent of today's teenage mothers are unmarried, in contrast with only 42 per cent of their counterparts in 1971 (Statistics NZ, 2003). According to Breheny and Stephens (2007b), these negative attitudes:

reflect ... the narrow boundaries of appropriate motherhood and normal adolescent development which constrain these out of the mainstream parents from being viewed as successful mothers (p. 122-3).

Scientific discourse, which often constructs teenage women as physiologically too immature for pregnancy and childbirth, is used to support the argument that they are unfit to be parents. This discourse is distorted by a tendency of some research to aggregate all teenage births in one age cohort. Whilst young mothers, under the age of fifteen, undeniably face increased risks because of their physical immaturity, their seventeen to nineteen year old sisters arguably have fewer risks in pregnancy and childbirth, as a result of age, than do mothers who delay childbearing into their thirties (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006, pp. 3-4).

Market-place ideologies and their impact on concepts of ideal motherhood

The normative trajectory of contemporary female development also has political, economic, classed and ethnic nuances. The desired model of contemporary neo-liberal discourse is that of financial independence, which places value on a person's economic contribution to society, and the material necessity of the two-income family (Bullen, et al., 2000; Wilson & Huntington, 2006). Because it is difficult to combine non-income earning motherhood with this model, the role of the 'at home' mother in the modern state has become devalued (Cherrington & Breheny, 2005, p. 105) and is no longer regarded as a worthy choice for any but the wealthiest women.

British researchers, Allen and Osgood (2009, p. 6) argue that this constructs the present ideal of motherhood as that of the wealthy, mid-thirties, well-dressed 'yummy mummy' of neo-liberal discourse, portrayed with admiration in the media. Younger mothers, who are more likely to come from working class or ethnic minority groups in which traditional family structures, gender roles and employment opportunities may be more clearly prescribed, do not conform to this ideal.

SmithBattle's (2006) extensive review of the literature on teen mothers' educational attainment confirms that "[t]eens with little hope of going to college or finding satisfying work – goals that are taken for granted by middle-class teens – have little reason to delay parenting and often view pregnancy as inevitable and positive" (p. 131). On the other hand, young women whose "social aspirations [are] supported by the wider value system are more likely to delay family formation and less likely to choose early motherhood to gain a form of social status" (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006, p. 13).

Feminist American researcher, Fine (1988) contends that young women with "traditional notions" of femininity as "self-sacrificing and relatively passive ... are disproportionately likely to find themselves with unwanted pregnancy and to maintain it through motherhood" (p. 48). This argument, which suggests that teenage parenthood is the outcome of low aspirations, constrained by class and tradition, may well have validity. Nevertheless, it indicates the fine line that exists in public and academic discourse between informed social commentary and judgementalism.

Allen and Osgood (2009, p. 8) argue that the negative construction of these alternative trajectories of 'femininity', which include earlier school-leaving and parenthood, and are identified with young women of working class and non-European ethnicity, have clear moralistic undertones. In the United States, for example, young black mothers have been vilified in the press as 'welfare queens' or 'neglectful mothers', despite the fact that they are outnumbered by their white middle-class 'sisters' (Hunter, 2007; Roxas, 2008).

Underpinning this condemnation in public and political discourse is concern, and in many cases, public outrage, about the financial dependence on the State of young parents, who are less equipped to enter the work-force because of their parenting role and their lack of educational qualifications. In the United States, attitudes to teenage pregnancy and parenting are characterised by stories of the dramatic increase in unwed teenage mothers (Zachry, 2005, p. 2568), and the economic burden this places on the State (Scholl, 2007, p. 32). This latter argument (without the rhetoric of unwed motherhood) has increasingly found voice in media and public discourse in New Zealand, reflecting changing attitudes towards the relative roles and responsibilities of the welfare state and of the individual.

Wilson and Huntington (2006), in their New Zealand review of the construction of teenage motherhood as a form of social deviance with clear class nuances, suggest that:

[T]eenage mothers are vilified, not because the evidence of poor outcomes for teen mothers and their children is particularly compelling, but because these young women resist the typical life trajectory of their middle class peers which conforms to the current government objective of economic growth through higher education and increased female workforce participation (p. 59).

In 2012, the middle-right leaning National Government won wide-spread public approval for its decision to control benefit payments to teenage mothers under nineteen through a form of food payment cards, contingent upon their attending parenting courses, and returning to school, training or employment by the time their children are one year old (Cheng, 2011).

Whilst this move may have positive consequences for some teenage parents and their children, I contest its underpinning judgment that teenage mothers are unfit to be good or responsible parents. This policy feeds the preoccupation with ‘welfare bashing’ of contemporary public discourse. Evidence of this is found in the emotive headline in the NZ Herald’s online article (Cheng, 2011), which reported this newly-released policy proposal: “Govt moves to refocus drop-outs ‘overdue’”. It is teenage parents who are constructed as ‘drop-outs’ in this report. As Allen and Osgood (2009, p. 3) argue, teenage parents are condemned as “welfare scroungers” because they have no place in neo-liberal discourses of “autonomous, individualised and ambitious young women”.

Social exclusion and teenage parenthood

High rates of teenage pregnancy as well as concern about social exclusion, which is arguably both a cause and result of teenage parenthood, underpin Britain’s New Labour Teenage Pregnancy Strategy released in the early years of the twenty-first century (Bullen, et al., 2000). As part of its broader focus on youth inclusion, this policy seeks to increase teenage mothers’ opportunities and obligations to participate in, and contribute to, society. It redefines the target of welfare funding to recipients, such as teenage mothers, as an investment in human capital rather than the provision of economic security. Education is seen as the primary means of achieving this investment. The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy aims to increase access to education, training

and employment for teenage mothers, and to reduce teenage pregnancy through improved sex education in schools. This strategy also aims to improve service delivery to teenaged parents and to address their health, education, employment, housing and economic needs for support (Wylie, 2009).

This nationally-co-ordinated social policy initiative has influenced New Zealand's less co-ordinated approach to supporting teenage parents and is cited in several policy documents (Collins, 2005; Wylie, 2009). Whilst review of the strategy indicates a reduction in rates of teenage pregnancy, Bullen et al. (2000, p. 443) argue that the policies are race-based, targeting young people of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and African-Caribbean ethnicity. They also argue that the focus on social inclusion and economic participation, based on access to educational opportunities, undermines the traditional role of the 'at home' mother. This is a dilemma which I consider again in Chapter Seven.

Teenage parenthood as the purveyor of social ills

Because of its link with social and economic disadvantage, teenage parenting has also become associated in contemporary academic and public discourse with every conceivable social ill, including crime, addiction, and other 'at risk' behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Burdell, 1995; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). This is one form of motherhood which is widely condemned, rather than celebrated, in today's world. According to Breheny and Stephens (2007a, p. 344), "Adolescent motherhood is viewed as transmitting long term social disadvantage, rather than as a valuable contribution young women make to society as mothers". This negative view of teenage parenthood is strongly challenged by the findings of my research study.

III: Implications of negative constructions of teenage parenthood

Working with young parents

The construction of teenage parenthood as a social problem has had many implications for the work of social agencies, health professionals and educators, as well as for teenage parents themselves. It has underpinned the subtle and not-so-subtle prejudices, as well as the good intentions, of many of these workers, and has impacted on their ability to effectively support teenage parents and their children (Breheny & Stephens, 2007b, pp. 122-123). Because of this, it is important that researchers challenge and expose the attitudes underlying the social

construction of this phenomenon as I have attempted to do in this review, in my own work and in my research.

However, it is important that I also acknowledge that the ‘problematising’ of teenage parenthood was the reason and context of my own employment as a teen parent support worker in the 1990s. It was also the genesis of the establishment of my own and other New Zealand Schools for Teenage Parents. In some ways, my work was a well-intentioned, middle-class, philanthropic form of patronage. It was also an attempt to respond, within the social discourses of ‘deficit’, ‘at-risk’ and ‘problematic’, to the needs of a group of young women as they articulated, and I interpreted, these needs.

Work with teenage parents and their children is the testing ground of academic theory. It is the coal face of engagement with real young women, men, their children and their families, the “identifiable, embodied youth” referred to by Lesko (2001, p. 13). Whilst I may now challenge the underlying beliefs and attitudes that created my own employment, and influenced my early work in this field, my fifteen years of personal experience with teenage parents and their children has shown me that for whatever reason – social stigma, the harmful effects of wide-spread and endemic disadvantage, the deprivation of personal, social, and cultural resources that resulted from this disadvantage, and the very fact of being a parent of any age in a society where community networks, such as extended family and close-knit neighbourhoods, have largely broken down – the young parents with whom I was working needed and warranted significant levels of community support to enable them to achieve their potential, and to be the best parents they could be. As Breheny and Stephens (2007a) affirmed, “motherhood [is] a challenge requiring support and community involvement regardless of the mother’s age and socio-economic position” (p. 343). They also proposed that “different social ... structures could support motherhood occurring at any point in the life course ... [so that] motherhood [could] be successfully combined with education and employment in any order” (p. 344). This was the goal underpinning the work of the School for Teenage Parents.

With this in mind, I now return to my story of ‘Mandy’ and her son, ‘Akiwa’. All or some of the negative descriptors of teenage parenting, reported in the quantitative research data, may indeed have reflected Mandy’s and Akiwa’s life circumstances. What was certain, however, was that this young woman, who sat apprehensively in my office, was a mother and shared the universal

hopes of most mothers, regardless of age, that she would be a good parent and that her child would be happy and healthy. Despite her previous negative school experiences, she was choosing to return to school because she believed that this would improve her life prospects and those of her son. What she needed, along with all mothers, was the support, respect and care of her community so that she had the best chance of realising her hopes (Breheny & Stephens, 2007b; Collins, 2010; Hindin-Miller, 2006a; Wylie, 2009). What she faced, as a teenage parent, was social stereotyping and disapprobation.

The identities of young parents

Our lives and identities are storied by the social discourses of the culture/s within which we live (Bruner, 2002, p. 65). These discourses unconsciously construct our positive or negative sense of who we are and who we can be.

Teenage parents are not inured to the negative effects of society's prevailing discourses about their identities as 'social and moral deviants', 'unacceptable' and 'unfit' mothers, 'welfare scroungers', and 'drop-outs'. Nor are they inured to the normative narratives of teenage parenthood which may be prevalent within the sub-cultures of their own families, peer groups and ethnic and/or classed communities. Teenage parents must negotiate these conflicting discursive contexts as they engage in the construction and reconstruction of their own identities, in what Giddens (1991) referred to as the 'reflexive project of self'. This is no easy task, and the identities, hopes and self-belief of teenage parents may take a battering in the process.

In the Australian WEETAG project (Milne-Home, Power, & Dennis, 1996, p. 6), which researched the implications of teenage parenthood on women's education, employment and training, the negative effects of social stigmatisation on young women's sense of self and future possibilities was highlighted:

One of the major problems ... is that young women are highly likely to accept such social stigmatising. The result can be a negative and self-limiting image, and an acceptance of extremely constrained options for the future. This ... is embodied in the ways young women have to cope with the straightjacket of the stereotype, especially in the area of employment, education, and training.

In my own study, the young women participants made frequent reference to social stigmatising and its effects on their sense of self and personal confidence. I discuss this again in Chapter Three.

Nevertheless, as a number of studies indicate, becoming a parent is a turning point experience which can be positively constructed by young mothers themselves, despite the negative framing of teenage parenthood in prevailing discourse. In her extensive studies of teenage parents, SmithBattle (2000, p. 35) described the experience of mothering as a catalyst that “anchors the self, fosters a sense of purpose and meaning ... and provides a new sense of future”. She proposed that “[m]any disadvantaged teens reorganise their lives and priorities around the identities and practices of mothering” (SmithBattle, 2006, p. 131). New Zealand researcher, Payne (2005) drew a similar conclusion when considering the impact of pregnancy on young women’s lives, stating, “Pregnancy ... confirms [young women’s] adult status, supplies them with a social identity, a sense of meaning and hope for a better future” (p. 21).

One aspect of these new-found hopes for a better future is the renewed interest of young parents in the benefits of education. In Part Two I will consider a range of initiatives undertaken in the United States and Britain to respond to the educational needs of teenage parents, and will also examine research into the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Part Two:

Education initiatives to support teenage parents

A positive consequence of the negative discourse about teenage pregnancy and parenting, reported so dramatically in the media and reinforced by risk-focused quantitative research, has been the initiatives which have taken place in the United States and Commonwealth countries, including New Zealand, to support (and, in some cases, control) teenage parents and their children. Many of these international initiatives have aimed at improving the access of pregnant and parenting teens to ongoing schooling, for a number of compelling reasons.

Research has clearly established an association between educational disadvantage and teenage parenthood (Bissell, 2000; SmithBattle, 2006). Teenage mothers have already discontinued or are at risk of discontinuing their high school education when they become pregnant (Fergusson & Woodward, 2000; Hill, 2005; Pogarsky, et al., 2006; Scholl, 2007; SmithBattle, 2006).

International research findings consistently confirm the relationship between a low level of maternal education and negative outcomes for children. Because of this, education is widely regarded as the panacea of social and economic disadvantage, providing a vehicle for better life prospects and opportunities for young mothers and their children (Save the Children, 2004).

SmithBattle (2006) argues that “educational attainment of young mothers (and fathers) should [therefore] be a top priority of health professionals, educators, and policy makers” (p. 130).

The pressure of such research findings has resulted in a range of teenage parent policies and initiatives, across many countries, which aim to support teenage mothers to remain in school and to graduate.

I: Initiatives in Britain

Britain’s recently established Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (already discussed in the earlier section on Social Exclusion) is the most co-ordinated of such approaches. Informed by policies based upon the work of Giddens (1991), which aim at promoting social inclusion, the Strategy prioritises the twin focus of reducing teenage pregnancy whilst supporting the involvement of teenage parents in education or employment. These twin approaches are seen as the most effective ways to enhance economic well-being, self esteem and positive identities in teenage parents and in young women, ‘at risk’ of becoming pregnant (Wylie, 2009).

Review of this relatively well-resourced national strategy has revealed the first reduction in conception rates in more than a decade (Wylie, 2009). The Strategy has also been criticised regarding its failure to meet its commitment to increase the participation of teenage mothers in education. Lall's study (2007) identified the lack of appropriate educational options for teenage parents throughout England, citing only two examples of well-resourced full-time schools for teenage parents in Bristol and in Nottingham, which provided transport, childcare and support, and taught the national curriculum. She found that, regardless of the Strategy's goals of educational inclusion, pregnant schoolgirls were still being quietly forced out of school by a lack of support, and by negative attitudes of school authorities and some peers. Of the forty seven units in England which offered educational provision for pregnant or parenting teens, Lall found only ten which provided full-time access to education, and only twenty six which provided some form of childcare. Other options for pregnant and parenting teenagers included hospital schools and home tuition, usually for a few weeks only. The young women interviewed by Lall wanted to attend separate facilities from mainstream school, which they felt was unable to meet their needs as parents. Lall concluded that the health needs of teenage parents were consistently prioritised over their educational needs, despite the goals of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

Hosie (2002) was also concerned that the educational needs of teenage mothers were of lesser priority than the focus on reducing teenage pregnancy. She challenged the Strategy's goal to keep pregnant and parenting young women in mainstream school when many of them had already disengaged from school prior to becoming pregnant. Hosie also identified the need for more flexible responses to the educational needs of young mothers alienated from mainstream education, including the provision of special education units.

II: Initiatives in the United States

In the United States, the 1972 Educational Amendments Act known as Title IX was passed to protect the rights of pregnant and parenting school-aged women to continue their education, rather than being forced out of high school by disapproving school officials and administrators. This resulted in a variety of federal state responses ranging from benefit-linked incentives for teenage parents to return to conventional school environments, often without the assistance of

childcare or transport, to the establishment of alternative schools specifically designed to meet the needs of their teen parent population.

A number of these educational programmes have been evaluated, with mixed results. Several studies have found that the structure and approach of traditional schools for pregnant and parenting teens limit the educational achievement of students by taking a remedial approach to their education, which leads to poor educational outcomes and higher drop-out rates (Hallman, 2007; Roxas, 2008). SmithBattle (2006, p. 130) found that educational and social welfare policies contribute to the gap between the educational aspirations of teenage mothers and their achievement. She found that the focus of conventional schools on attendance, grades and academic progress ignores the complex realities of teenage mothers' lives and creates barriers to their educational options, as does the lack of childcare facilities and transportation. Hunter (2007, p. 75) found that, regardless of Title IX, teenage mothers still have difficulty accessing mainstream education because many school authorities fear that they will morally contaminate other students.

Other researchers, including Burdell, Fine and Lesko, have expressed strong objections to the 'segregation' of teenage parents in special educational programmes which make them invisible by removing them from mainstream school environments. Burdell (1995, p. 202) argues that these institutions should be responsive to the curricular needs of teenage parents, and that special school programmes actually contribute to their stigmatisation. Hunter (2007) supports this argument, stating that "alternative school programmes outside of the mainstream school building ... may be ... further isolating teen mothers from their communities (p. 90).

Whilst I understand that the principle of 'inclusive' education underpins this perspective, other research findings, including my own, do not support this argument because of the practical inability of mainstream schools to adequately meet the unique needs of teenage mothers. A number of studies would argue that, in reality, alternative education initiatives are among the more constructive approaches to reframing the negative impacts of stigmatisation experienced by teenage mothers (Hallman, 2007; Roxas, 2008; Scholl, 2007; Zachry, 2005).

Many teenage parents, who have attended alternative schools, have also decried the experience of attempting to continue their education in mainstream high schools (Hallman, 2007; Hunter,

2007; Roxas, 2008; Zachry, 2005). The young women in my study were particularly negative about the inability of mainstream schools to meet their educational and social needs as teenage parents.

More recent studies of North American alternative schools, set up specifically to accommodate the needs of teenage parents, have found that these have achieved greater academic success than mainstream high schools with this cohort of young students (Amin, et al., 2006; Hallman, 2007; Scholl, 2007). Several qualitative studies have also found that, contrary to commonly-held views that teenage parents are not interested in accessing educational opportunities, many young mothers express increased motivation to improve their educational outcomes following the birth of their children (Hill, 2004; SmithBattle, 2006; Zachry, 2005).

Several of these studies of the educational experiences of teenage mothers in the United States warrant more detailed discussion here. I have selected the following examples because they are rigorous and influential pieces of research, with useful implications for work with teenage parents everywhere. They also provide a context for New Zealand education initiatives, and for my own research.

III: Studies of successful North American education programmes for teenage parents

In a landmark study, Seitz and Apfel (1999) undertook a detailed examination of thirty years of research into intervention programmes, designed to reduce the “adverse consequences of early childbearing” (p. 50) for teenage mothers and their children in the United States. They concluded that the most effective programmes were often located in schools, focused initially on the mother’s parents early on in their pregnancies, and aimed at preventing rapid subsequent pregnancies. They argued that carefully-chosen and well-targeted services, involving the collaboration of public schools and healthcare professionals, could be highly effective in supporting young parents to continue their education and to receive medical and social support.

In an extensive review of research on teen mothers’ educational attainment, school aspirations, and the policies that impact upon their education, SmithBattle (2006) concluded that “the success of teen mothers is enhanced by completing high school” (p. 130). Because of this, she argued that “school districts should give high priority to supporting teen mums to remain in school and

graduate” (p. 130). Her review confirmed the findings of many researchers including Zachry (2005) and later, Roxas (2008) that:

Although teen mothers may begin mothering with educational and social disadvantages, the demands and responsibilities of caring for a child inspire many teens to recommit to education to improve their life chances and long-term success (p. 134).

My own story of ‘Mandy’ demonstrates this aspiration of many young mothers to recommit to education. SmithBattle argued that these aspirations were often met by low teacher expectations and a lack of support from mainstream schools, including the inability to provide fundamental services such as reliable childcare and transport. She concluded that a comprehensive response was needed from schools, in collaboration with their communities, to provide “educational remediation, quality daycare, legal services, vocational and college advisement, mental health programs, safe housing and family support programs” (p. 134), all located within the school environment. Because of her own background in health, SmithBattle proposed that school nurses have a key role in encouraging young mothers to return to school. She concluded that “becoming a mother is a pathway to adulthood and a life-changing experience that reorganizes many girls’ priorities and contributes to new hopes and dreams for the future” (p.134).

SmithBattle’s extensive research into teenage parenthood is widely cited in the research literature, and provides a broad context for the following research studies, which investigate and evaluate specific educational contexts for teenage parents in the United States.

In a qualitative study of nine young women attending a teen parents’ program in the North East United States, Zachry (2005) concluded that “the teen mothers in this study assert a renewed concern for their own education and its importance for their futures as a result of becoming mothers and being involved in a quality education program” (p. 2567). Zachry’s study was the first I came upon in my literature search which interviewed the young women themselves to investigate their perspectives as young parents and as students. Like me, she was also a participant researcher who, as a graduate student, was teaching the young women in her study. Her detailed exposition of methods of data collection and analysis provided a helpful context for my own study and was influential in my subsequent investigation.

Zachry also discussed the negative construction of teenage parenthood, based upon political, moral and racialised discourses of personal failure. These racialised discourses, informed by the higher teenage birth rate amongst Black and Latina young women, were relevant to my own New Zealand context in which teenage parenthood has similar racialised components because Māori teen-aged women are more likely than their European sisters to become pregnant (Paki, 2002).

Zachry contests discourses which blame individuals, rather than inequitable social structures, for their disadvantage. Her study found that her young women participants viewed welfare as a temporary step to help gain educational skills and better paying jobs; and that becoming a mother helped them ‘grow up’ and realise the importance of education and the need to maintain their families. These findings reframe the negative discourses of teenage parent welfare dependence and educational failure.

Of particular relevance to my own study is Zachry’s contention that:

Whatever their past feelings about school, each of the women in this study discussed how her current school was helping her to build a more positive future and increase her confidence in herself and her intellectual abilities (p. 2594).

The young women attributed their academic success to supportive and encouraging teachers, and a positive school environment which helped them feel more in control of their lives. Zachry concluded that “these types of programs should continue to be supported and built upon” (p. 2595) so that mothering teens can complete their high school education.

One significant point of difference between the context of this study and my own is that Massachusetts State law requires teenage mothers who receive welfare benefits to participate in schooling. In my study, the young women mostly attended the Teen Parent School by choice and, therefore, it can be argued may be less representative of teenage mothers in general than the participants in Zachry’s study.

In her descriptive article about the education of ‘adolescent parents’, Scholl (2007) also discusses the history of education provision for pregnant and parenting teenagers, and the implications of the 1972 Education Amendments Act. She argues for the effectiveness of special programmes for teen parents (the early response to Title IX), based on her review of long-term studies of

several alternative schools including McCabe, researched by Seitz and Apfel (1999). These studies indicate that graduation rates of attending teen parents are greatly increased, and this positively impacts on subsequent employment prospects and financial independence. Scholl identifies the inability of ‘mainstreaming’ (the dominant trend in school policies) to meet the unique needs of teenage parents: “few have the financial ability or support systems to solve the childcare and transportation problems that keep them from attending” (p. 29). She also identifies the characteristics of effective special programmes for teenage parents, which include “small class sizes, nurturance, personalized guidance, and mentoring”. The longer a student is able to stay at the special program, “the better she did” (p. 30).

Because pregnant and parenting teens and their children “fare better” within supportive communities, Scholl’s article targets educational leaders, whom she argues “are in a pivotal position to provide direction as to how schools and communities will meet [these young people’s] needs” (p. 28).

Although I contest Scholl’s underlying view of teenage pregnancy as a “perennial youth challenge”, which requires a “proactive approach to curbing the problem” (p. 28), my own study’s findings support her assessment of what works.

Amin, Browne, Ahmed and Sato (2006) conducted a quantitative and qualitative evaluation to identify the strengths and weaknesses of an alternative, school-based, one-stop comprehensive program for teenage parents located in Baltimore City, the site of the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the United States. This extensive, well-resourced and rigorous study argued that the educational, social, economic, psychological and health needs of teenage parents are not well-served by fragmented service delivery. They found that comprehensive programmes which offered academic support in combination with counselling, health and social services, in a school setting “where students feel comfortable”, promoted “higher educational aspiration, better reproductive health outcomes, higher contraceptive use, and more breast-feeding practice and intention” (p. 192).

Because of the similarities between the services provided in the school program studied by Amin et al. (2006) and those of the School for Teenage Parents in my study, these findings provide a relevant research context for my own study.

Schools as sites “for the cultural production of positive identities”

In their critical ethnography of schooling, Levinson, Foley, & Holland (1996) proposed that:

Adult education for working class women is about establishing an identity, and the cultural capital this identity entails, as much as it is about acquiring specific skills. Thus the school should ... serve as a site for the cultural production of positive identities (p. 25).

School has long been recognised for the role it plays in the formation of identities (Patterson, et al., 2010).

In Hallman’s (2007) study of the literacy practices at another North American school for pregnant and parenting teens, she found that the “unique, alternative learning spaces” (p. 80), which the school created for its young women students, supported “the production of positive identities” (Levinson, et al., 1996, p. 25). The school’s literacy programme was used to positively reframe the identities of its students as multifaceted individuals: as learners, mothers, and adolescents. These positive identities acted as a counter narrative to the prevailing attitude that early parenthood is incompatible with educational or career success and with “tenets of good mothering” (p. 91). Hallman concluded that this “reassignment of identity is a critical component of recognizing how [alternative] schools [for teenage parents] can be effective learning places for their students” (p. 96). This clearly-presented qualitative research, which draws on participant observations and interviews with the young women students, and uses discourse analysis to interpret its findings, was especially relevant to my own research and its emerging theme of the reframing of identities through the construction of positive counter narratives of success.

Having reviewed international responses to the educational needs of teenage parents, I will now turn to the New Zealand context of my study, and will briefly consider the socio-political circumstances which contributed to the uniquely New Zealand response to the perceived educational needs of its own teenage parents. I will examine a number of relevant New Zealand research studies of teenage parents, and will share my own story of the Teen Parent Unit attended by the young women who were my research participants.

Part Three:

The New Zealand context

I: Teen Parent Units

In the 1980s and 1990s, youth health and development had become an increasing focus of public policy in New Zealand, with the establishment of the Ministry of Youth Affairs in 1988, and a growing number of agency and community-based youth work projects. At the same time, New Zealand's relatively high rates of teenage pregnancy and parenthood were causing concern for health professionals, social workers, politicians, community organisations, and, to a lesser degree, educators.

The knowledge that teenage parents were 'dropping-out', or had already 'dropped-out', of high school provided the impetus in several regions for the setting up of small alternative schooling and support projects to meet the needs of this alienated group of young people. Each of these early initiatives, established within a period of several years in the mid 1990s, was a unique response to the needs of its own local community.

In 1997, these community-based 'schools' in Porirua, Kaiapoi, Invercargill and Upper Hutt were selected as Demonstration Projects by the Crime Prevention Unit (part of the National Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley's office), because of their work with what were deemed to be 'at risk' youth. Provided with financial assistance, and with support from their local Safer Communities Councils, these projects were studied and evaluated, over three years, to assess how well they met the target goals of supporting the education and training of teenage parents, fostering positive parenting skills, enhancing self-esteem, and improving employment prospects and outcomes (Rivers, O'Regan, & Lynch, 1997a). These 'crime prevention' strategies were also intended to prevent extended dependence on government welfare payments. The ensuing report recommended Government's continued support of these educational initiatives because of their perceived success in delivering the required objectives of the CPU (Lynch, Rivers, & O'Regan, 1999).

At this time, early intervention programmes for vulnerable families were increasingly regarded as effective measures to counter social disadvantage and costly longer term welfare dependency. Interagency co-operation was encouraged under the Labour Government's Strengthening

Families Policy, which emphasised a more holistic and comprehensive approach to working with disadvantaged families such as teenage parent families, in order to meet their multiple needs. In a report on access to education for teenage mothers and fathers, the Ministries of Youth and Women's Affairs (1998) cited the work of Seitz and Apfel (1999), whose favourable review of comprehensive, 'one stop' educational and social service programmes for teenage parents in the United States offered a positive model of service provision, which State agencies were urged to implement.

Within this encouraging socio-political environment, Susan Baragwanath (1997), the founder of New Zealand's first teen parent school, strongly argued the case for ongoing and adequate State funding of alternative schools to meet the diverse educational and social needs of teenage parents throughout New Zealand. She stated that "Students who are parents have need of educational treatment beyond that normally obtained in an ordinary class" (p. 2).

Alternative education initiatives were also supported by Fergusson et al.'s findings (2000, p. 147) that pregnant young women, under eighteen, had odds of leaving high school without qualifications that were 10 times those of their non-pregnant peers.

By the turn of the century, all of these socio-political influences - New Zealand's high rates of teenage pregnancy, concerns about the costs of long-term welfare dependency, the pervasive discourse of 'youth at risk', and the emphasis on early intervention programmes - had created a political environment receptive to the State support of alternative schools for teenage parents. In 2004, following extensive lobbying by ATPENZ (the recently-formed professional association of teen parent educators), the Ministry of Education accepted its financial and policy responsibilities for these schools, and produced an Education Circular to this effect (2004). This innovative, nation-wide response placed New Zealand in the forefront of international educational initiatives to meet the needs of teenage parents and their children.

Today some twenty schools, or Teen Parent Units, have been established throughout the country to address the special needs of teenage parents, referred to by Baragwanath (1997). These Units enable young parents, both mothers and fathers, to continue their education in a supportive environment with onsite childcare facilities and transportation to and from school, factors identified as important to ongoing school attendance for young parents (Scholl, 2007;

SmithBattle, 2006). They aim to assist these young people to develop the education and personal resources needed to enhance their own and their children's future health and well-being, through the provision of comprehensive services to meet their diverse needs. At any one time, about 600 teenage parents and their children are enrolled at Teen Parent Units, as yet a small proportion of the approximately 4,500 teenage parents who give birth in New Zealand each year (Collins, 2010).

II: New Zealand research on Teen Parent Units and their students

When I commenced my own study in 2009, there had been little research into the effectiveness of these Units in offsetting the negative impacts on young women and their children, associated with teenage parenting and with socio-economic and educational disadvantage. Two evaluations had been undertaken into the quality of education offered by Teen Parent Units: an Education Review Office report (Education Review Office, February 2007) and a Ministry of Education report on the teaching and learning strategies, processes and systems that are effective in raising student achievement in Teen Parent Units (Carlisle & Gibbs, 2008).

The University of Auckland had published a report on the health and wellbeing of secondary school students attending Teen Parent Units (Johnson & Denny, 2007); and a case study had been undertaken of one Teen Parent Unit (Cubey, 2009) to advocate for secure, ongoing funding, following the Minister of Education's 2006 moratorium on the building of new Units (which was subsequently lifted in 2007). Several qualitative Masters theses had investigated the educational needs and experiences of teenage mothers in New Zealand, two of these within the context of Teen Parent Units (Paki, 2002; Taylor, 2002). Two other reports - one on social support needs and the other on the use of ICT - had also been undertaken in Teen Parent Units (Charteris, 2005; Poelzleitner, 2007). The dearth of research into the longer term influence of the Teen Parent Unit experience on the lives of teenage mothers and their children provided some of the impetus behind my own study.

It is of note that other New Zealand studies of teenage parents have increasingly drawn their participants from Teen Parent Units, and offer interesting and useful insights into these schooling contexts. They include two qualitative studies on 'risk' and 'protective' factors for teenage parents by Collins (2005, 2010), Wylie's (2009) review of 'best practice' in support work with teenage parents, undertaken for Waipuna Youth and Community Trust, and a study of the

‘imagined futures’ of teenage mothers attending Teen Parent Units (Patterson, et al., 2010). I will now consider the findings of some of these studies in more detail.

Best practices for promoting student achievement in Teen Parent Units

Independent education evaluators, Carlisle and Gibbs (2008) were contracted by the Ministry of Education to undertake a short, intensive study of the educational environment of a sample of six Teen Parent Units, at the end of 2007, in order to identify “teaching and learning strategies, processes and systems that are effective in raising student achievement” (p. 2). This followed the Education Review Office report on Teen Parent Units (Education Review Office, February 2007), and had the stated purpose of “informing a ... schooling improvement project and providing useful feedback about good practice and next steps for those involved in teen parent education” (p. 2). The researchers developed a set of indicators of effective teaching practice and assessment drawn from the work of Alton Lee (2003) and Absolum (2006), to inform their evaluation. These were used as the framework for interviews with teaching staff and students of the Units, as well as classroom observations and document analysis, all conducted during a one and a half day visit to each Unit.

Carlisle and Gibbs found that “TPUs were more than just pleasant places in which young parents could congregate – they were productive and focused environments in which students were encouraged and supported to learn” (p. 2). They identified Teachers-in-Charge of TPUs as critical to the building and maintaining of positive cultures of teaching and learning. They observed a range of good quality practices in a number of the Units, which they measured by high student engagement and academic achievements. These included collaborative planning of individual programmes, encouragement of personal responsibility for learning through goal setting and evaluation, well-structured timetables, and focused, responsive and flexible teaching practices. They noted the supportive cultures of the TPUs and the warm and orderly learning environments built upon collaborative, democratic and respectful relationships and high teacher expectations, which promoted student wellbeing and achievement. Teacher to student ratios of 1:10 were identified as contributing to the success of the TPUs as learning environments.

The evaluators noted the focus of the TPUs on the holistic wellbeing of their students, with the provision of a range of onsite services to meet social, health and welfare needs in addition to educational aspirations and achievements. They acknowledged that mainstream school

environments could not readily meet the complex educational and support needs of teen-aged parents. A limitation of this research relates to the timing of the evaluation, late in the busy school year, and the speed with which the process was undertaken as a result of Ministry of Education timeframes.

Since this report, the Ministry of Education has instituted a Schooling Improvements Project for the twenty Teen Parent Units, terminating in 2011. The findings of the Project and subsequent ERO reviews of Teen Parent Units are outside the time-frame of my study: 2005-2008.

Nevertheless, this report is of particular relevance to my own study because of its focus on the Teen Parent Unit culture and practices that promote and support student learning and wellbeing.

The Health and Wellbeing Report

The University of Auckland Report (Johnson & Denny, 2007) of a survey of 220 students from nineteen Teen Parent Units (49 per cent of the total number of students attending TPUs at the time of survey) aimed at defining “the risks and problems” (p. 5) for teenage mothers attending the Units, in order to inform TPU staff, health workers and policy makers of how best to meet the health and well-being needs of these young mothers and their children. This survey, undertaken as part of the much larger Youth’07 New Zealand Secondary School Student Health and Wellbeing Survey, used a well-designed, youth-friendly, audio-visual questionnaire with cartoon graphics, conducted via an internet tablet, in which questions were answered by a point and click stylus. Ethical implications of the survey, particularly with regard to sensitive questions, and voluntary participation, were thoroughly covered with participants, and safety messages and helpful contact numbers were provided.

The ensuing report included a clear outline of survey methods and questions, which measured some important components of health and well-being. Although some of the findings, such as rates of smoking, dietary and exercise habits, substance abuse and living circumstances, would already be self-evident to most TPU staff, the quantifiable data on less visible components of sexual health, emotional well-being and physical violence could provide a useful starting point for targeted support by staff (one of the goals of the survey).

Whilst the report found that the majority of students enjoyed attending and “felt safe and supported within the Teen Parent Units” (p. 4), it also identified mental, sexual and physical

health needs as areas of “significant concern” amongst the young mothers, compared with their non-parenting peers. These results support the local and international data about teenage parents, and are indicative of the relatively disadvantaged socio-economic and personal life circumstances of this group of young people, when compared with their non-parenting peers. The survey highlights the need for comprehensive support services for teenage parents.

Missing voices

Collins’ original study (2005) was the most substantial of a cluster of a dozen or so theses using qualitative methodologies to investigate the lived experiences of teenage mothers in New Zealand. These studies emerged within a context of “overwhelmingly quantitative [research] from a biomedical perspective” (p. ii). Collins’ aim was to explore how young women viewed their experience of pregnancy and parenting. Using semi-structured interviews, she drew on feminist and healthy youth development theories to identify the ‘risk’ and ‘protective’ factors in the lives of her eighteen teenage mother participants, and the social policy implications of these factors.

Twelve of Collins’ eighteen participants attended a Teen Parent Unit and talked extensively about the benefits of this form of support. In common with the many studies cited in this chapter, Collins concluded that ongoing participation in education was protective in the lives of her young participants. However, “without a school for young mothers,” she argued, “few would have returned to education” (p. 233). She found that the Teen Parent Unit not only supported the young women to continue with their education but “also connected them with supportive adults ... [who] provided practical assistance and nurtured them emotionally by helping them deal with their past and consider alternatives for their futures” (p. 234). The Unit’s provision of transport and quality childcare also “help[ed] young mothers re-enter education and employment, and develop their strengths, and assets” (p. 236). Collins concluded that the comprehensive support needed by young parents was unavailable in mainstream schools.

Despite the social stigma of being a teenage parent, which inhibited some young mothers from seeking support, Collins’ participants articulated their positive attitudes to their status as young mothers, and their optimism for their own and their children’s futures. Collins recommended that the Government develop “a comprehensive, whole-of-government teen pregnancy strategy [to

meet the educational, health, and social needs of teenage parents and their children] for which the English approach could be used as a model” (p. iii).

Collins’ (2005) study was influential on my own research, which also used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of its teenage parent participants, and drew on students from a (different) Teen Parent Unit. Her findings about the educational, health and social needs of her participants were strengthened by an integrated use of feminist and youth development theoretical frameworks. However, her concluding recommendations about the importance of retaining and returning young mothers to school were weakened by the failure to specifically mention Teen Parent Units as a viable alternative to the mainstream, particularly as her own findings were so conclusive in this area.

Resilience in teen mothers: A follow-up study

Collins’ (2010) follow-up study of resilience in teenage mothers provides a longer-term perspective of the experiences of thirteen young mothers, first interviewed seven years before in 2001 for Collins’ earlier study. Funded by the Ministry of Social Development as part of wider research into sources of resilience in sole parents, Collins’ study focuses on “competencies and positive outcomes rather than on negative ones” (p. 3), in a deliberate attempt to balance the risk-based studies which “tend to predominate in the literature” (p. 46).

Nine of the study’s participants had attended the Teen Parent Unit mentioned above, and her findings offer important insights into the benefits of these Units for young mothers and their children. Collins concluded that:

The comprehensive nature of this service, the intensity of interactions with mothers and children, the availability of trained and qualified staff, and supported referrals to other services, provides an excellent model for other community-based services” (p. 49).

Of particular relevance to my own study was Collins’ finding that Teen Parent Units support personal characteristics associated with resilience, such as having goals and aspirations for the future, taking pride in one’s achievements, being motivated and taking responsibility, and having a strong sense of identity. Collins’ observation that “resilience may come from contradicting social norms and finding ways to empower [oneself] through being very good at things that are not socially accepted” (p. 12) is explored in some detail in my own study.

As with all the above studies, Collins found that teenage mothers perceive childbirth as a positive turning point in their lives. Collins was therefore able to construct “teenage birth as a protective factor” (p. 46).

Collins’ study is the first New Zealand research to re-interview the same group of young mothers after an extended interval of time, in this case seven years, to explore their perceptions of sources of support in their lives. Framed by healthy youth development theories, Collins has theorised the resilience of her participants in terms of the presence of ‘protective’ individual characteristics, and strong family, social and educational support. This has enabled her to offer practical and substantiated guidelines for service delivery to teenage parents. Collins, herself, acknowledges that the number of participants is small, and that, because they had all been linked into supportive community-based services when first interviewed, generalisations about their resilience could not be made to all teenage parents.

Headlines and Heartlines

This study (Patterson, et al., 2010) was one of two research projects which explored how New Zealand secondary school students imagine their lives might turn out, especially regarding family and personal relationships. (The other project, Lifelines, was undertaken with 100 Year 13 students.) Drawing its participants from Teen Parent Units, the second study aimed to establish whether social location shapes the narratives young people produce about their imagined futures. The researchers “wanted to explore whether the homogeneity of the future imagined by the young New Zealanders ... in the earlier project was perhaps a consequence of the social homogeneity of [their] participants” (p. 17).

Patterson and her team conducted a guided writing exercise with 68 young women students of Teen Parent Units. They found that, despite having experienced “a disruption to the culturally dominant normative life trajectory” (p. 6), these young women:

draw upon the same dominant narrative as other young New Zealanders when imagining their futures, ... [that of] A Happy, Stable and Contented Life, marked by enduring [rewarding] family bonds ... and the incremental consolidation of material possessions (acquired through ... paid work) to provide familial comfort and security (p. 3).

The young mothers were more “cautiously optimistic” (p. 3), materially modest and pragmatic than their non-parenting peers, and they imagined futures in which their children remained their primary familial relationships.

Patterson et al. concluded that it was not the homogeneity of their participant group that accounted for their somewhat consistent imagined futures but the commonality of their social locations. Both groups of participants were school students, and the researchers argued that the liberal discourses that predominate in New Zealand schools regarding personal responsibility and autonomy, combined with culturally dominant narratives which idealise family life, have created this shared ‘imaginary’.

Of particular relevance to my own research is the study’s argument that “Schools are an important vector for transmitting optimism, and offer young people access to imaginaries through which they can negotiate positive social and personal identities” (p. 3). The study proposed that Teen Parent Units are likely to offer positive narrative resources to their students which will support them to see themselves “as ‘good mothers’ with imaginable futures, in contradiction of the negative stereotypes which abound about ‘teenage motherhood’” (p. 3). The authors concluded that for young mothers to achieve their imagined futures “it may be appropriate to challenge those policy approaches that collectivise [them] as a ‘social problem’, and to identify approaches that will assist young mothers [to] realise their aspirations in concrete and practical ways” (p. 3).

The study’s authors have articulated some of its limitations, suggesting that the writing guide, used by most of the teen parent participants, may have prescribed the imagined futures in certain ways. This research would also have been strengthened by the identification of a greater range of characteristics in its participants, such as ethnicity and socio-economic background. Even if this information had not been used in the current study, subsequent analysis may have offered a more fine-grained understanding of New Zealand secondary school students’ imagined futures. Nevertheless this report provided my own study with a relevant local context regarding the prevalence of dominant cultural narratives and their influences on the hopes and aspirations of young parents. This is of particular note because of my study’s use of narrative methodology.

Meeting the needs of teen parents and their children: Promising practices

This research (Wylie, 2009) was commissioned by Waipuna Youth and Community Trust to facilitate the development of a teen parent strategy in Christchurch, based upon ‘best practice’ guidelines. It aimed to identify the support needs and barriers to access confronting teen parents and their whānau, especially Māori and Pacifica, and to investigate effective teen parent interventions operating in other areas, which could be adapted to circumstances in Christchurch. Using a ‘strengths-based’ approach, Wylie conducted a review of local and international teen parent literature, a questionnaire with Plunket Well-Child service providers (a free New Zealand service for babies and their parents), and ten focus group interviews with 59 teenage parents drawn from two Teen Parent Units, Waipuna’s own support service, and several other service providers.

Based on her analysis of data drawn from these sources, including a service provision wish-list from the young parents themselves, Wylie came up with the following recommendations: that young parents should be treated with respect and lack of judgement, by open, honest, professional, supportive and positive service providers, who listen, advise and inform, rather than telling their young clients what to do. Services should link their clients with appropriate and practical sources of support, ensuring that transport and childcare services are available if needed. Young parents would prefer these services to be accessed from the one location.

This timely research study is of particular relevance to the teenage parents and service providers of the Canterbury region and provides a useful analysis of hard-to-access local statistical data on teen parents. Of special note is Wylie’s focus on teenage fathers, an often-neglected cohort of teenage parents.

Having examined a range of New Zealand research literature on teenage parents and Teen Parent Units, I will now turn to a discussion of the Teen Parent Unit which provides the specific location and context of this study.

III: The School for Teenage Parents in this study

The School for Teenage Parents in this study was initially set up as a study group in the mid 1990s, in response to a request from two young mothers with whom I was working as a teen parent support worker. Both had ‘dropped out’ of school without qualifications and wanted to

study for School Certificate by correspondence, to improve their chances of finding ‘good’ jobs. They had received their first English booklets, and needed help. I organised a small weekly study group in my office and we set to work. I was excited to be teaching again after fifteen years away from the high school classroom.

Not long after this, I happened to read about an off-site school classroom for teenage mothers in a nearby locality, and invited myself to visit. This encouraged me to extend the study group to include other young women from my case-load who might be interested in resuming their schooling. The Community Trust which employed me was enthusiastic in its support, and, for a nominal sum, rented a local church hall twice weekly for our ‘classes’. We studied at wooden trestles, the young women’s babies and toddlers playing around our feet.

The following year the study group moved into rented rooms in a Community Centre. Plunket (a free, health-based support service for new parents and their children) was conveniently located just down the hall. I started collecting the young parents and children in a community-owned van; and was joined by two volunteers who helped look after the children while we studied.

Early in 1997, the Community Trust secured three years of much-needed funding from the National Government’s Crime Prevention Unit. CPU’s brief was to “address the needs of youth at risk” (Rivers, O’Regan, & Lynch, 1997b) and teen parent education was seen as one way of doing this. We became a “demonstration project”, enabling CPU contractors to regularly visit and evaluate our study group in an agreement which greatly assisted the formalising and resourcing of our activities. The year ended successfully with our first prize-giving ceremony, attended by the Mayor, our local Member of Parliament, the media, family and friends, to celebrate the young parents’ academic achievements.

In 1998, a memorandum was signed between the Community Trust and a local High School which was keen to support our educational initiative, whilst at the same time increasing its falling roll. I became a part-time employee of the School, which enabled the Trust to use its resources to employ a driver as well as a second support worker, and two childcare assistants to help with the study group. Our formal relationship with the Ministry of Education had commenced, and with the assistance of a supportive local Ministry official, we secured some meagre funding for our young parents as ‘adult students’. Each new development was

enthusiastically covered by our local press, and we became the recipients of offers of support from the local and wider community, including volunteer literacy tutoring from ARAS (Adult Reading Assistance Scheme) and funding assistance from ZONTA and Soroptomist (two professional and business women's service organisations).

The next significant development was prompted by the Trust's successful negotiations with the local Council to 'donate' to us an unused Service Centre, for refurbishment as a childcare facility. The study group, which now comprised some eighteen young parents and their children, had greatly outgrown the 'shoe-box' facilities of the Community Centre. With the agreement of the local High School, the Council building was to be placed on a semi-circle of unoccupied land, conveniently located at the rear entrance to the School, and a little distance from other school classrooms. I had been reluctant to consider the School premises as an alternative location because of the young women's mostly negative experiences of school, but they were overwhelmingly supportive when I surveyed their opinions on this move.

CPU funding enabled us to set up and equip our Early Childhood Centre with guidance from the (now-disbanded) Early Childhood Development Unit, which had been asked by unspecified 'government officials' to take us under its wing. Our Centre was officially opened with a formal dawn blessing by our High School's kaumātua (Māori elder) in 1999, and the children moved into their well-appointed new premises. The High School agreed to let our study group use its audio-visual theatre as a classroom for three mornings a week. My teaching work with the young parents was now being supported by the voluntary assistance of my mother, also an ex-teacher, and by the High School counsellor, who was also the chairman of the Community Trust.

In 1999, the Council further supported our venture by contributing funds towards the purchase of a much-needed portable classroom, which was attached to the Early Childhood Centre by a covered verandah. We now had our very own study space right next door to our Early Childhood Centre, and felt 'spoiled for riches'.

During this same year, we had employed a fully-qualified early childhood teacher to oversee the licensing of the Centre. This milestone (the first licensed Early Childhood Centre attached to a Teen Parent School in New Zealand) was achieved at the start of 2000; other qualified early childhood teachers were employed, and my teaching ranks were swelled by the assistance of two

more part-time teachers. With careful management of funds, we were able to purchase a cheap second-hand van to assist with our ever-increasing transport requirements.

Over the preceding years, I had established close and supportive working relationships with other teen parent 'schools' which were springing up around New Zealand. Following strenuous negotiations on our part, the Ministry of Education agreed to initiate a series of annual meetings of 'school' representatives in Wellington, in an endeavour to support and regulate our ventures. This provided an excellent networking forum for the existing and nascent 'schools', and we formed a professional association, ATPENZ, in 2002. I became a member of its first executive body and hosted its first national conference. We were determined to negotiate consistent funding for our 'schools', as well as formal contractual agreements with our primary provider of teaching resources, The Correspondence School. ATPENZ provided a unified and successful voice for these negotiations.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education produced a Circular (2004) with policy and funding guidelines to 'regularise' our multifarious teen parent initiatives, which the MOE now referred to as Teen Parent Units. This nomenclature articulated the Ministry's intention to limit the scope and independence of our 'schools' and place them firmly under the governance of mainstream 'host schools'. We had bartered our independence for funding, and funding had won. Until this time, the only funding assistance my 'Unit' had received from the Ministry had been in the form of circumscribed operational funding for our students, and statutory funding for the licensed Early Childhood facility. Our buildings had been provided by the Council, and the Trust was funding the staff (other than the part-time teachers and myself, who all received EFTS funding from the High School).

With the intervention of our local Member of Parliament, we finally succeeded in securing much-needed funding for a new and adequately resourced classroom block from the Ministry of Education. This would not only accommodate our growing student numbers but also our staff, now comprising two part-time support workers, six part-time teachers, two drivers and an administrative assistant. (This number didn't include our seven early childhood teachers who already had their own premises.) We moved into these well-designed and equipped new premises, which were attached to our existing portable classroom, now remodelled as a kitchen and second classroom, at the start of 2005, with an official blessing ceremony from our kaumātua.

My research covers the time period of 2005 – 2008, a period when battles for funding had mostly been won, and when we were finally housed in our own self-contained and attractive facilities. We were now functioning as a five-day a week ‘school’ for teenage parents with an attached and licensed Early Childhood Centre for the children of the young parents. We were an example of a grass-roots initiative that had grown organically in response to the needs of its members. We had been supported by diverse community and government agencies and organisations, as well as a number of interested individuals. Over the years, we had been (and would continue to be) visited by Members of Parliament including the Prime Minister and Ministers of Education and Finance, the Children’s Commission, various branches of the media, other Teen Parent Unit teachers, Ministry of Education and local government officials, international guests of Safer Community Councils, and numerous other visitors keen to see what we were doing. We felt like a ‘show-piece’ and were both proud and enthusiastic to share manaakitanga (hospitality) with our guests.

How the School functioned: Some vital statistics

The Teen Parent School roll was fixed at thirty students by the Ministry of Education in 2004. Its attached Early Childhood Centre was licensed for twenty five children because of the size of its building and the philosophy of its teachers, who were committed to a mixed-age centre which kept all the children together in one location. This discrepancy in numbers was difficult to manage, especially when there were young parents on the roll with more than one child. This was balanced by the small number of pregnant young women at the School, and by the transition of some older children to kindergarten before starting school.

In the time period of my research, the School had a total of 89 students, of whom only two were young fathers. In the School’s thirteen year history (to the end of 2008) we had had seven young fathers as enrolled students, but many more fathers visited the School and Early Childhood Centre, and some participated in aspects of the daily programme, such as feeding their children at lunchtime, or going on outings.

The Teen Parent School and Early Childhood Centre were physically connected in a ‘U’ shaped arrangement of three buildings. This enabled the young women to see their children playing in the playground from the kitchen windows, and to hear the sounds of their play in the main classroom.

Two drivers were employed to collect the young parents and children who had no transport of their own. The van runs were extensive and could take upwards of one and a half hours each journey. There were also two social support workers on the staff (one male and one female), and the young parents were able to seek their assistance whenever needed. This included support with relationship counselling, drug and alcohol counselling, parenting advice, budgeting, housing and accommodation issues, legal advice, and advocacy with a range of agencies. A number of services were brought into the School including Plunket, Work and Income, and specialised counselling. Dental services and free health checks were also available on occasion, and the young parents had weekly access to the 'host school' health clinic.

The teacher to student ratio in the School was 1:10, the same as that of alternative education centres. Each student had an individual education plan which reflected their previous school achievements (if any), their individual choices and career aspirations. This IEP was regularly reviewed and modified in consultation with a tutor who was responsible for weekly goal-setting. Courses of study drew upon distance learning options (primarily provided by The Correspondence School), and group programmes taught at the School and, occasionally, at the 'host school'. These included a full range of Year 9 to Year 13 (high school) courses as well as some tertiary level programmes. In addition to the core subjects of Maths, English and the Sciences, popular subject choices included Legal Studies, Early Childhood Education and Care, Computing, and Home Economics. The young parents were encouraged to achieve their NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) qualifications and commonly stayed at the School for at least two or three years in order to do this. Because the teaching staff chose to work part-time, we were able to employ seven teachers, including myself, with a range of subject strengths comprising Maths and English, Science, Computing, Commerce and the Humanities.

The school day began between 9.00 and 9.30 with the arrival of the vans, and of students with independent transport. The kitchen was well-used at this time for breakfasts and hot drinks, before the Early Childhood Centre opened to the children at 9.30. The school programme started at 9.40 with a twenty minute whole group activity which enabled individual teachers to share their special interests with the young parents. These morning starters often included a focus on parenting, such as reading to your children, or how to keep your children warm in the winter. They also drew on the Virtues Project (Popov, Popov, & Kavelin, 2006) for personal

development, and a range of Maths, Geography, Science and English skills and quiz activities. On Mondays, this twenty minute period was spent in tutor groups, setting individual goals for the week. From 10.00am, there followed one hour of individual study, and a fifteen minute morning tea break during which healthy food was provided. There was another hour of study between 11.15 and 12.20 pm, when the young parents went through to the Early Childhood Centre to feed their children lunch. Their own lunch-break followed from 1.00 to 1.30 pm, and once a week we ate a shared lunch, prepared by several of the young parents with the assistance of a support worker. The afternoon comprised one more hour of study in the classroom. The next three quarters of an hour was spent in some form of physical activity or games including Pilates, outdoor sports, board games or the use of the school gym, if this was available. The final fifteen minutes involved the daily voluntary roster of cleaning-up activities before the parents collected their children from the Early Childhood Centre at 3.30 pm. The last families were ‘dropped off’ by the vans between 4.45 and 5.00 pm.

On one afternoon a week there was an alternative programme of creative and performing arts, health, sports and fitness, Tikanga Māori, parenting, cooking or crafts. Every second week there was an afternoon activity or outing with the children, which was later changed to a weekly morning activity session of songs, poi, and stories with puppets. Guest speakers were also part of the afternoon programme and a diverse range of subjects was covered including sexual health, budgeting, relationships, careers advice and parenting. In addition to this programme, individual students were encouraged to sit their Driver Licences, with tuition from a qualified driving instructor funded by STAR (secondary-tertiary alignment funding); to complete their First Aid Certificates; and to undertake work experience in approved work placements. There was also an annual Reading Challenge to encourage the regular practice of reading to one’s children; and a Smoke-Free Challenge to support those young parents who wanted to quit smoking. Every term the young women were consulted about how the previous term had gone, and were invited to give input into future planning for the School, which they did with enthusiasm.

In this chapter, I have explored a number of contexts of my research question. I have considered the ‘pathologising’ influence on public discourse of quantitative research into the characteristics and outcomes of teenage parenthood. I have also discussed the role of qualitative research in framing alternative perspectives on teenage parenthood by giving voice to the more positive

understandings of young parents themselves. I have examined a number of educational initiatives set up to respond to the disengagement from school of teenage parents in the United States and Britain; and have looked at the New Zealand research context, and our own home-grown response to the educational needs of teenage parents in the form of Teen Parent Units, including the Unit which is the specific context of this study. I will now turn, in the following chapter, to the “universe of discourse” (Mercer, 1991, p. 42) comprising those theoretical and epistemological contexts used to frame the study and the analysis of its findings.

Chapter Three:

Theoretical framing of the study: A “universe of discourse”¹

Research Journal entry: Nov 2009

Having resisted the pressure from my supervisors to select relevant and appropriate theoretical frameworks for my research because I felt that this would prevent my data (and my young women) from speaking for themselves and, in a sense, predetermine the analysis and findings of my study, I have come to the realisation that theoretical frameworks of one sort or another permeate, and have influenced, every stage of my mahi – my work – and therefore my research project, its questions and methodological approaches, and ultimately its analyses and conclusions.

In this chapter, I draw on the “universe of discourse” (Mercer, 1991, p. 42) that comprises social and educational theory to discuss the influences underpinning my work with teenage parents and the culture of the School. I discuss the role of social theory; and identify the theoretical frameworks which I have drawn upon in the analysis of my research data. These include a social constructionist perspective (Burr, 1995) to frame the discursive contexts within which the identities of the young women participants were fashioned; Durie’s (1998) human development theories to frame the holistic work of the School; and models of culturally-responsive pedagogical practice, particularly those indigenous examples described by Macfarlane (2007) and Bishop (2009), which seemed to ‘speak’ most articulately to the culture and practices of the Teen Parent School.

I: My theoretical ‘whakapapa’ or genealogy

As a qualitative researcher with feminist leanings, I will add my voice to the “universe of discourse” by identifying cultural, social and familial influences that have contributed to my own ontological perspective, and to the choice of epistemological or theoretical frameworks which guide this research (Burgess, Sieminski, & Arthur, 2006, p. 42). In sharing my theoretical

¹ A metaphor, that theory provides a “universe of discourse” for the discussion and explanation of research findings, used by Mercer (1991, p. 42).

whakapapa or genealogy (Mutch, 2005, pp. 62-63), I am acknowledging that I am neither a passive nor dispassionate researcher (Boden, et al., 2005; Goodson, 1992; Trahar, 2006).

I was raised in a middle class family by parents who had university degrees and who placed a high value on education as a means of succeeding in the world, both professionally and personally. My mother was a third generation New Zealander of Cornish and Scottish heritage, and my father was a new migrant of Latvian Jewish and Swiss Catholic parentage, who arrived in New Zealand at the age of 17. I attended a private girls' school with a reputation for excellence in academic and sporting achievements. I was often in trouble at school, and memories of those years are peopled with tyrannical school mistresses, and traditions begging to be challenged.

In the early 1970s, my parents flouted academic conventions by returning to university as mature adult students, whilst I was completing my own Master of Arts in English literature. They also gained Master of Arts degrees which they added to their existing qualifications, demonstrating the value and importance they placed on lifelong education, and a healthy level of family rivalry.

On finishing university, I decided to become a secondary school teacher, and taught in the conventional and alternative school systems for five years in the 1970s, before joining the Probation Service which was, at that time, a social work rather than 'correctional' role.

My mother had become an ardent feminist in the second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 70s, and together we attended the United Women's Convention in Christchurch in 1977. Feminist thought strongly informed my own understandings of women's oppression, and I propounded these with passion.

My concern with women's and human rights, and my belief that societies and individuals are capable of transformation, were very much influenced by the 'zeitgeist' or 'spirit' of the age in which I was growing up in the 1960s and 70s. These attitudes were powerfully reinforced by several overseas trips, the 'OE' or 'rite of passage' of many young New Zealanders. I travelled extensively to countries including Britain, Communist Russia, Europe, and the United States, and spent several weeks in Haiti, which was, at that time, ruled by the oppressive and corrupt dictator, Baby Doc Duvalier. I was profoundly affected by the destitution and social injustice that I witnessed there.

In the early 1980s I married and became a parent of two children. This experience was to fundamentally influence my future decision to work with young families. It seemed to me that families were the most important and vulnerable of social units, and needed a lot of support and nurturing if positive and far-reaching social changes were to take place in our communities. I was particularly concerned with the isolation of so many young families in the New Zealand context, and with the inadequacy of the ‘modern’ nuclear family’s capacity to embrace and nurture both mother and child. This was greatly influenced by my own experience of parenting with limited access to family or community support, in the isolated rural settlement in which I lived with my husband and two young children. It was also affected by my complete lack of previous contact with babies, and by the helpful support we received from our rural ‘Plunket’ nurse (a post-natal home visitation service), to whom we directed all the questions that our extended family and village community would have answered in other, more supportive, contexts.

As a Baha’i, my spiritual framework also served to reinforce for me the importance of family, of gender equality, and of education – especially the education of women, who are, amongst many other roles, the first educators of children. Through my faith community I became actively involved in facilitating workshops on parenting and family life, relationships, the equality of women and men, and the education of children. I also came into increasing contact with a wide variety of ethnicities and their diverse family practices, and, in particular, with tikanga Māori (Māori practices, values and beliefs). Baha’i gatherings were frequently held on marae (Māori meeting places), as an acknowledgement of the importance of tangata whenua (the indigenous people of New Zealand) and their cultural practices. Because of this, I attended kohanga reo (an early childhood Māori ‘language nest’) with my children, as well as the local Playcentre. Other forms of early childhood education and care were not available in my small rural community. All these experiences greatly influenced the empathy I was to feel for the young people with whom I later worked at the School for Teenage Parents, a number of whom were Māori.

II: Epistemologies underpinning the work of the Teen Parent School

When my children were at Primary School, I was able to fulfil my aspiration of working with young families by becoming a Teen Parent Support Worker for a rural community trust. This began fifteen years of rewarding and demanding work with teenage parents and their children.

The story of my role in establishing a School for Teenage Parents is outlined in Chapter Two. Here it is my intention to identify some of the evolving philosophical beliefs and theoretical concepts that influenced my work.

Underpinning the kaupapa (purpose) and philosophy of the School was my personal commitment to the importance of the education of women, particularly women who are parents. This was reinforced by research findings that the educational status of the mother was the clearest indicator of the future well-being of her child(ren) and therefore had intergenerational benefits for whole families (Save the Children, 2004). The young women with whom I was working as a Teen Parent Support Worker had few if any school qualifications, mostly negative experiences of schooling, and limited options for future careers. For many of them, however, becoming a parent was a motivating factor and I wanted to support their desire to access further education.

I felt that education could be transformational for the marginalised and often isolated young people with whom I was working. This was an emerging belief, strongly reinforced by my observation of the powerful impact on the young women of the educational successes they experienced in our study group. For many, these successes were the first they had achieved in their high school careers, and they had a positive and motivating effect on their attitude to education and to themselves as learners.

However, I was aware that academic education alone would be unable to create real and constructive social change in the lives of these often vulnerable young families. Early in 2000, I had become acquainted with Durie's "whare tapa wha" (the four-walled house) model of human development, which proposed that human well-being, or hau ora, rested on the healthy and balanced development of the mind and emotions, the body, the spirit and the family (Durie, 1998). It was already my belief that there was more to human development and well-being than the Western binary focus on the mind and the body. I was convinced that, in order to be truly effective as an agent of change, the School must offer its students intensive, ongoing and holistic support for all their needs.

I came to see the possibilities of the School as a form of constructive early intervention in the lives of these young families (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), an intervention which might support them to overcome the social and structural inequities with which they were contending in their daily

lives. Durie's model provided an indigenous framework for the School's philosophy, curriculum and practices. In order to support the holistic needs of the young families, some of whom had limited family and social support, the School would require social support workers and services as well as teachers, and a balanced programme of activities, including parenting support and advice. The School would also need to act as a form of extended family or whānau for its young families, as Durie's model proposed.

Practical components would be important such as the provision of daily food and transport, as well as a structured programme incorporating routines, clearly articulated standards of conduct, high aspirations and consistent support, to counteract the often chaotic circumstances of some of the young parents' lives (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). One of the unique practical and emotional needs of the young parents was for quality on-site early childhood education and care for their children as an integral part of the Teen Parent School structure. After all, the young parents were first and foremost parents, and that was their reason for attending the School. I believed that their children deserved the very best education and care that could be provided, especially as few of them would access other early childhood facilities at such a young age. To this end, qualified early childhood teachers were employed as soon as funding was made available to the Community Trust.

It was also my belief that the young women's role as parents required the full acknowledgement and support of the School and its staff. We would consciously endeavour to counteract the negative discourses about teenage parents expressed by many professionals in the fields of health, social welfare and education, and by members of the general public, reinforced by the media.

From my work with teenage parents, many of whom had already 'dropped out' of school before becoming pregnant, it was evident that the conventional school system had largely failed them. The Teen Parent School was therefore designed to look and feel and operate in ways that were different from mainstream high schools, so as to attract, support and retain its students. Staff and students called each other by their first-names and interacted inside and out of the classroom, quite informally, throughout the school day. Students were consulted about their own and the School's programme; and the hierarchical structures of the conventional school system were much less evident at the Teen Parent School. The young parents and their children were to be at the very heart of the schooling experience, which would endeavour to be responsive to their

needs. It was my conviction that one of the dilemmas confronting large and well-established institutions, including schools, was that the population they were set up to serve often became secondary to their own institutional requirements.

Underpinning all my work was, in my view, the most important belief of all: that people blossom and thrive when treated with ‘unconditional positive regard’ (Rogers, 1951). At the Teen Parent School we would attempt to make loving support and care the hallmark and characteristic of all our work.

Whilst conscious of my feminist roots, of my spiritual and social beliefs about the importance of educating women and children, of counselling theories, and of Māori tikanga and models of human development, I was largely unaware of the whole body of socio-cultural theoretical models, and of Māori culturally responsive pedagogies, which were to prove so applicable to the culture and practices of the Teen Parent School. I discovered Russell Bishop’s Te Kotahitanga Professional Development Programme (Bishop & Glynn, 2003), and the writings of Angus Macfarlane (Macfarlane & New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2004) in the penultimate year of my work at the School and investigated these more fully when I commenced my own study.

III: Theoretical framing of this study

I retired from my position as Director of the School for Teenage Parents at the end of 2008 and commenced my doctoral study at the start of 2009. As part of my research, it was necessary to grapple with the complexities of educational theory and to work with those which I felt best suited my own study. This involved an unanticipated journey of intellectual discovery, a ‘movable feast’ of ideas and epistemological frameworks.

The first part of this journey required a search for the purposes of theory and an answer to the question: why use a theoretical framework at all? New Zealand researchers, Davidson and Tolich (1999, p. 17) state that “theory without research is mere speculation; research without theory is merely data collection”. Critical social theorist, Jean Anyon (2009, p. 1) propounds the argument that “[d]ata collection ... without theoretical guidance is ... ‘blind empiricism’ ... [which] yields data, but very little social explanation”. I realised that for research to have meaningful application within an educational context, theorising about the implications of data was an

essential process which could contribute to educational change and innovation. I had already worked in the practical field of educational change; now I needed to theorise the social and pedagogical implications of this work so that it could make a contribution to knowledge and practice in other educational contexts (Boden, et al., 2005, p. 40).

I found Dressman (2008) particularly helpful in my study of the history and uses of social theories and their relevance to educational research. He explained social theory as a broad range of arguments from a wide scholastic field of inquiry, which emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and included such influential thinkers as Marx, Vygotsky (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2009), Dewey (1938), Foucault (1980) and Freire. Dressman argues that theories provide insight into social and educational problems and enable educators to “refigure the world in more equitable ... terms” (2008, p. 48). He describes theory as a “dialectical scaffold” for the framing of research data and analysis. Anyon (2009, p. 2) talks about the “constant conversation [of research and data] with a theoretical arsenal of powerful concepts”, a process which yields social explanation and the potential for social change. I especially like the metaphor used by Mercer (1991, p. 42) that theories provide a “universe of discourse” for the discussion and explanation of research findings. This suggests a wealth of theoretical possibilities from which we can choose, and allows that there are multiple ways of approaching and analysing the same research data.

It was from Dressman (2008, p. 57) that I came to understand that “data never speak for themselves” and that, at every stage of the research process, the researcher’s underlying attitudes and beliefs intrude. Reflexive thinking is therefore essential so that the researcher can clearly articulate the underlying beliefs and attitudes that she brings to her research. I have used reflexive thinking at each stage of my study and have endeavoured, in this chapter, to clarify my own theoretical genealogy or ‘positionality’ as part of this reflexive process.

It was after reading Dressman’s (2008, p. 99) discussion of the “comparative application of multiple social theories” that I decided to draw upon several different theoretical frameworks in my own research study. In my search for relevant and useful theoretical lenses, I had explored a range of socio-cultural theories (Nayak & Kehily, 2008; Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff, Turkanis, & Bartlett, 2001), feminist perspectives (Borland, 1991; Cotterill & Letherby, 1993; Kelly, 2003; Maynard & Purvis, 1994; Middleton, 1993; Skeggs, 1994), theories pertaining to learning

communities and communities of practice (Kilpatrick, Barrett, & Jones, 2003), critical social theories (Levinson, et al., 1996; Youdell, 2011) and many more. I needed to find a way of managing this complex and overwhelming field of study.

New Zealand academic educator, Mutch (2005, p. 60), provided a useful guideline to the scope and boundaries of educational theories, dividing these into macro-level, mid-range and micro-level perspectives. She identified macro-level theories as those which explain how societies and social systems function. Mid-range theories define and explicate phenomena such as human development, identities and learning. Micro-level theories deal with particular phenomena in specific situations, for example, educational innovations such as the Teen Parent School.

I needed to identify theoretical frameworks which would ‘speak’ to the underlying narrative concept of human ‘being’ and ‘becoming’: that we are the ‘stories’ we tell ourselves and that these stories are drawn from ‘discourses’ and ‘narratives of human experience’ which are available to us in the familial and social contexts of our lives. The ‘macro-level’ theory which I decided would best frame my study of these contexts was social constructionism. The ‘mid-range’ theories which seemed pertinent to my field of study included those ‘biographical’ theories of identity described by Kehily (2007) and Bullen, Kenway and Hey (2000), and by human development theorists such as Durie (2001) and Bronfenbrenner (2005). I was later to abandon Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical frameworks because of the unnecessary layers of complexity these would add to my data analysis. ‘Micro-level’ theories of culturally-responsive pedagogical practices including those of Māori theorists, Macfarlane (2004) and Bishop (2006), seemed to ‘speak’ most articulately to the culture and practices of the Teen Parent School.

These theoretical frameworks or ‘universe of discourse’ are located within the interpretivist paradigm, which synthesises the multiple experiences and understandings of a cultural issue (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 29), in this case the cultural contexts of the young women’s lives, including the Teen Parent School. This paradigm also acknowledges the interactive construction of knowledge that takes place between the researcher and her participants.

I will now turn to a more detailed explanation of the theoretical perspectives I have selected to frame my study, and will discuss why I have chosen these perspectives, as well as any limitations I consider them to have.

Social Constructionism

Social Constructionism is an epistemological framework which challenges the positivist view, held by the traditional sciences, that the world is objectively knowable. It theorises our understandings of the nature of reality as historically and culturally constructed, rather than absolute and objectively verifiable; these understandings are, therefore, relative and changeable over time. Social constructionists regard knowledge as something that is socially constructed between people in the course of social life and interaction. Language is the tool that we use to construct our understandings of ourselves and the world around us.

Two areas of particular interest for social constructionists are the function of language and the notion of 'self'. Both of these concepts are completely reconceptualised in constructionist terms (Neimeyer, 1998, p. 137).

Language and discourse

According to Neimeyer (p. 137), language is viewed by constructionists as a network of 'signifiers', which have an arbitrary rather than fixed relationship to the things they signify. Because language constructs and constitutes social reality, it is performative rather than representational. Language is a social artefact which is historically and culturally produced; it is, therefore, constantly changing and varied in its meaning (Burr, 1995, p. 32). Because of this, meaning is contestable and contested by different members and groups within a linguistic community, according to their interests and positions within that community.

Discourses are those sets of meanings, metaphors, representations and stories that together produce particular versions of 'reality' or 'knowledge' (Burr, 1995, p. 48). There may be multiple discourses surrounding persons and events. Social constructionists are interested in the ways in which these different discourses both produce and describe social phenomena; and the underlying power relations that privilege some discourses over others. 'Power' is an effect of discourses, which have "the potential to produce and regulate the world in their own terms as if they were true" (Youdell, 2011, p. 25). It is in the resistance of alternative voices and discourses which challenge prevailing 'knowledges' and their power implications that we find the possibilities for social and personal change, from a social constructionist perspective.

Self and identity

Social constructionists also challenge the ‘common-sense’ notion of a stable, unified, knowable and essential self, which comprises coherent personal traits, attitudes and competencies. Rather, constructionists posit the self as a social construction, “deeply penetrated by the language of one’s place and time” (Neimeyer, 1998, p. 140). ‘Selfhood’ is regarded as fragmentary and multiple. Because it is linguistically created and sustained in our relations with others, this means that there is the “possibility of alternative constructions of the self and other ‘events’ in one’s world, through language” (Burr, 1995, p. 34).

Having abandoned the concept of the ‘essential’ self, constructionists talk instead about identities or subjectivities which are socially constructed and, therefore, open to challenge and to change. According to Burr (1995, p. 76) “[w]e are all in the process of claiming and resisting the identities on offer within the various prevailing discourses” and this is a “conflict-ridden” process, particularly for those marginalised groups whose identities and discourses threaten what is accepted as knowledge.

Critical stance on “knowledge” and prevailing discourse

One of the attractions of social constructionism is the critical stance it assumes regarding what is accepted as ‘knowledge’. It does this, in particular, through its close attention to prevailing discourses underpinning written, spoken and visual ‘texts’ - all those aspects of life and culture that can be ‘read’ for meaning (Burr, 1995, p. 48). This includes the prevailing discourses that, for example, define people according to age, gender, social class and ethnicity; that sustain conventional schooling practices; and that ‘problematise’ teenage parents, all of which are the subject and context of my study.

According to Neimeyer (1998, p. 137), the challenge of social constructionism to ‘modernist’ epistemological frameworks clears a space for alternative theories and readings, which can be used to support an agenda of social action and institutional change. This perspective, therefore, offers a useful lens through which to investigate the discursive effects of social action and institutional change on the lives of the teenage mothers who attended the alternative educational setting of my study, the School for Teenage Parents.

The social construction of teenage parents

From a social constructionist perspective, discourses are “intimately connected to the way that society is organised and run” (Burr, 1995, p. 54). The prevailing discourse surrounding the identity of teenage parents is evidence of this. Appearing in Western public discourse as a newly identified social phenomenon in the 1970s, teenage parenthood became constituted as a social, economic, political and personal ‘crisis’ in the 1980s (Lesko, 2001). Prior to this it was unwed mothers who had attracted public disapprobation and concern. There are a number of social, economic, and political influences on this changing perspective, which I have outlined in some detail in Chapter Two. They include the normative discourses surrounding what is viewed as age-appropriate adolescent development, with its extended years of formal schooling and dependence on parents; the older mean demographic of first-time parents which has resulted from women’s increased entry into the work-force (and from access to reliable contraception); concerns about the drain on government-funded welfare payments for ‘dependent’ teenage mothers, about the multiple causes of family deterioration including teenage and single parenthood, about the ‘social exclusion’ which results from young mothers being ‘out of school’; and the racialised and classed demographics that are used to define teenage parenting as a visible target for condemnation, especially in the United States and Britain.

These discourses of disapprobation and social ‘panic’ ignore centuries of normative parenting by young people in their teens across many cultures, and have been fuelled by health-dominated research findings on the multiple social, economic and medical disadvantages faced by teenaged parents and their ‘unfortunate’ children. As outlined in Chapter Two, more recent research findings have located these ‘disadvantages’ in factors such as poverty, rather than in the age of young parents per se.

The fit between social constructionism and narrative methodologies

In this study there is complementarity between the focus of social constructionism on language and discourse and my use of narrative methodologies. Because language is viewed as constituting the structures of social reality (Neimeyer, 1998, p 136), narrative methodologies and their focus on ‘language as narrative’ offer an appropriate means of accessing and analysing the ‘texts’ of human experience in social contexts such as families, schools, and other cultural settings and interactions.

As well, social constructionists explain our ‘common-sense’ understanding of personality and ‘selfhood’ as an attempt to make meaning of our lives and experiences through a narrative framework, a form of life story (Burr, 1995, p. 30). Narrative methodologies are underpinned by the concept that our understandings of ‘self’ are socially constructed through culturally available stories. In my study I have used the life stories told to me by the young women participants, and framed by the social contexts mentioned above, to examine their changing identities and understandings of self as young women, young parents and learners.

Identities

Identities, and the discourses and social contexts that construct them, emerged as a prevailing theme in my study of the young women who were students of the School for Teenage Parents. I have already discussed the rejection by social constructionists of ‘essentialist’ concepts of personality and selfhood. These have been replaced by concepts of fluid identities and subjectivities, which arise from interactions with other people and are constructed out of the language and discourses which are culturally available to us (Burr, 1995). According to Butler, there is no self-making “outside of the norms that orchestrate the possible forms that a subject may take” (Butler & Davies, 2008, p. xiv). As outlined above, these perspectives on identity construction are shared by narrative methodologies, which define ‘self’ as storied by culturally and contextually available narratives.

In our interviews, my participants spoke about their experiences of age, class, ethnicity, education, parenting, cultural practices regarding alcohol and drugs, sexual relationships, and aspirations. It was apparent that their identities were constructed and constituted from the discourses and stories available to them in the social and cultural contexts of their lives. The School for Teenage Parents was one such context: an educational initiative that endeavoured to transform the identities available to the young women who were its students by offering them other narratives, or stories of identities. My study of the School examines this process from the perspective of various members of its community.

Limitations of social constructionism

The ‘death of self’

Social constructionism offers a useful lens through which to understand the social construction of ‘self’ and identities, and the powerful hegemonies of prevailing discourses which constrain

and oppress whole categories of people, such as the teenage parents of this study. However, there are extreme theoretical implications of this perspective with which I take issue. Whilst I accept that ‘self’ and identities are socially constructed in the contexts of social interchanges between people in different cultural settings – if I did not share this perspective there would have been little point in establishing an alternative school for teenage parents – I do not accept the extreme proposition of the ‘death of self’, suggested by social constructionist perspectives.

It is my belief that human beings are in essence spiritual, as well as material, in nature. Although Western social theorising appears to negate spirit, traditional Māori epistemologies view humans and the ‘natural’ world as infused with ‘wairua’ or spirit (Macfarlane, et al., 2008). This acknowledgement of spirit implies that there is something that is uniquely ‘oneself’ about each of us. If this were not the case, why is it that, despite our shared experiences of social contexts and the narrative possibilities these offer, we still have the capacity to express our responses to these constructs in a diversity of personal and individual ways. These personal expressions may indeed be constrained and prescribed but I would argue that they still exist. I was to experience this repeatedly in my years of working with teenage parents and, more recently, in the range of personal ‘voices’ that came through in the interviews I conducted with my research participants. Whilst there was much common ground amongst the young women in terms of their life experiences and the role these played in the framing of identities, there was still the spark of uniqueness in each person’s responses to these experiences, a personal ‘style’ that belies the concept of the ‘death of self’.

The decentring of the subject

Another aspect of postmodernist thought and, in particular, of social constructionism, with which I take issue, is what Burr (1995) refers to as the ‘empty person’ or the decentring of the subject: the move away from “the particular understandings and experiences of identifiable, embodied youth” (Lesko, 2001, p. 13), which results from the focus on the social construction of knowledge rather than on the human beings who make and are defined by knowledge. My interest in this study is very much in ‘embodied’ youth and their individual experiences and understandings, as well as the social structures and practices that frame these.

More recently, Youdell (2006, p. 2) has addressed this issue in her discussion of the “constellations of identity markers” such as gender, class and ethnicity, which are discursively

synonymous with constructs of ‘ideal’ or ‘impossible’ learners. Youdell (2006, p. 28) describes how “categorisations of the person” such as feminine, middle-class and White “render some bodies and selves [educationally] possible and others impossible”. In other words, students’ bodies and selves are bound by hegemonic discourses to educationally excluded and included subjectivities. The young women in my study challenged cultural norms of acceptable ‘feminine’, ‘student’, ‘sexual’ behaviour by the very nature of their identity as teenage parents, which therefore categorised them as ‘impossible bodies’ and ‘impossible learners’. Youdell (2006) goes some way to addressing my disquiet about the absence of individual ‘bodies’ or voices and the prevalence of generalised, impersonal and disembodied theoretical understandings in social constructionist research.

Postmodernist thought celebrates “the multiplicity of (equally valid) perspectives” (Burr, 1995, p. 185), making possible the utilisation of other ‘equally valid’ theoretical approaches. I will now turn to some other perspectives which I regard as complementary with social constructionism, and with my study’s underpinning theory of human ‘being’ and ‘becoming’, and discuss why I have also found these to be of use in this study.

Biographical and human development theories of identity

Theories of ‘identity’ are multiple and contested, comprising psychological and sociological perspectives, as well as long-established theories of human development. I have already discussed social constructionist perspectives of ‘identities’. I will now outline several other theories of identity which are also relevant to my study.

Critical moments

In her extensive exploration of youth and youth identities, Kehily (2007, p. 4) outlines three general perspectives: cultural, anthropological and biographical. She proposes that biographical perspectives of self are useful in contextualising work with young people because they identify the importance of ‘critical moments’. These critical moments act as “turning points in young people’s lives” (Thomson, 2007, p. 104).

‘Critical moments’ include such life-changing experiences as pregnancy and childbirth, family and educational milestones, all of which are the focus of my own study with teenage parents. These turning point experiences have a significant impact on life choices and identities. A

number of researchers (referred to in Chapter Two) have discussed the transformative experience of ‘early’ motherhood as an avenue for achieving fulfilment and a sense of identity (Collins, 2005; Payne, 2005; SmithBattle, 2000; 2006, p. 131). In Chapter Five: Part Two, I present excerpts from interviews with the young women in this study about the role of motherhood as a positive turning point in the fashioning of their identities, regardless of the undermining impact of social stigmatisation.

‘Choice’ and ‘Risk’ biographies

Bullen, Kenway and Hey (2000) theorise identity construction as a process of ‘normal’, ‘choice’ and ‘risk’ biographies in young people. This reconceptualises notions of youth ‘transitions’ and ‘pathways’ in order to describe the less predictable and more convoluted “journeys from school to work and from adolescence to adulthood” (p. 447) of some young people today.

Bullen et al. describe teenage parenthood as a ‘high consequence risk biography’ in which young women from disadvantaged backgrounds, for whom educational experiences have been unfulfilling, envisage a limited range of ‘pathways’ or life choices for themselves. They argue that these young women are much more likely than their educationally more successful peers to continue with their pregnancies.

These authors also discuss the role of personal fables (or stories) in the construction of the identities of young mothers. Drawn from “media and literary models” (p. 449), these fables are melded with the more traditional values of family structure and defined sex roles, modelled within the young women’s own families and sub-cultural groups. Bullen et al. (2000, pp. 454-455) define these young women as ‘at risk’ because of the perceived incompatibility of motherhood with education and employment, and because of society’s negative judgements of their status. They conclude that:

Educational interventions must be sensitive and sympathetic to this paradox ... at the same time, they must help these young women to construct alternative risk scenarios for themselves and their children. [These should include economic independence and the ability to] write alternative narratives ... Risking new ways of being female is what is at stake for this cohort of young women.

This writing of “alternative narratives ... that draw on more enabling ... scenarios” (Bullen, et al., 2000, p. 454) was the work of the School for Teenage Parents. In my study, the young women talk about their experience of this process and its effect on their life choices and identities.

Intergenerational influences on biographical understandings of identity

Individual biographies are also subject to the influence of intergenerational processes, as well as the more particular contexts of an individual life. Thomson (2007, p. 90) discusses a study of three generations of women by Nielsen and Rudberg which she states outlines three components of identity formation: gender identity - the kind of woman one wants to be; gender subjectivity - the kind of woman one is, which is influenced by childhood and maternal modelling; and the possibilities of identity offered by culture and society. The interplay of these components of identity formation is explored in the life stories of the young women who participated in my study.

In their review of research literature which examines how young women engage with the contemporary discursive constructions of ‘the maternal’, Allen and Osgood (2009) found that working class mothers who were upwardly mobile dis-identified with their own mothers, in particular those mothers who were teenage parents. Allen and Osgood argued that “These young women were deeply aware of normative discourses which pathologise working-class mothers” and defined their own material success “through an ambivalent ‘othering’ of their own mothers” (p. 12). This reflects intergenerational components of identity construction and the limiting options of the autonomous, middle-class, and financially independent ‘maternal’, offered by contemporary culture. The implications of these normative discourses on the identities of the young women in my study will be examined in some detail in Chapters Five to Seven.

Human development theories

Human development theorists such as Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2001, 2005) and Durie (1998, 2001, 2002) propose that our sense of self and identity develops within the cultural or ‘ecological’ contexts of our lives. These contexts include our families, ethnic groupings, socioeconomic status, schooling, and the wider dominant cultural context, discourses, and structures of the society within which we live. These theories of human development identify those experiences which contribute to the formation of healthy and positive self-identities and those which

constrain our sense of self and well-being. Positive contexts which promote healthy identities include supportive and supported family environments, school settings which nurture and encourage their students, and social contexts which are affirming of the diverse groups and individuals which comprise them. Hence the relevance of these theories to my study.

Durie's Whare Tapa Whā model of human development

As already described earlier in this chapter, this uniquely Māori model uses the four walls of the Tupuna Whare (ancestral house) as a metaphor for holistic human development. Each wall: spirit (wairua), body (tinana), mind or emotion (hinengaro) and family (whānau) is interdependent. The balanced development of each component or 'wall' is therefore required for health and well-being: the Māori concept of waiora (personal well-being) or whānau ora (well-being of the whānau).

This model exposes the limitations of Western dualistic theories of human nature, and their inappropriate application to the fields of Māori health and education. It challenges the conspicuous absence of spirituality (wairuatanga) from the field of Western social theorising, and validates indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. The model of "whare tapa whā" underpins a number of Māori educational theories, including culturally responsive pedagogies. Its emphasis on the importance of whānau, as the foundation of the model, reflects the holistic perspective of Māori indigenous epistemologies (Macfarlane, et al., 2008, p. 107).

"Whare tapa whā's" acknowledgement of spirituality validated the School's endeavours to integrate spirituality into daily practice (in contrast with the secularity of conventional New Zealand high schools). This harmonised the School's tikanga (cultural practice) with that of its Early Childhood Centre which, informed by the Early Childhood curriculum document, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2009), used karakia (prayers) as a natural part of its daily routines, in a clear acknowledgement of the importance of taha Māori (Macfarlane, et al., 2008).

Durie's model of human development offers a coherent indigenous framework which is relevant to the New Zealand context of the Teen Parent School. Te whare tapa whā informed the School's attempts to meet the holistic needs of its Māori and Pākehā (European) students, as young parents and as young adults. Durie's model provides a useful indigenous lens through which to

examine the extent to which the participants in my study felt their holistic needs were met by the School's cultural practices.

Culturally-responsive pedagogical theories

Culturally responsive pedagogical theories comprise the final group of theoretical frameworks which I have chosen to draw on in this study. Initially developed in the United States, in an endeavour to understand the cultural and educational needs of 'minority' ethnic groups who were not thriving in 'mainstream' schools, these theories fall within Mutch's (2005, p. 60) definition of micro-level theoretical frameworks because they explore educational innovations within the micro-context of the classroom. They therefore have much to say that is relevant to my study of the School for Teenage Parents and its role in the refashioning of identities.

Gay (2002, p. 106) identified the essential elements of culturally responsive teaching as follows:

1. developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity;
2. including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum;
3. demonstrating caring and building learning communities;
4. communicating with ethnically diverse students; and
5. responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction.

Study of a North American School for Teenage Parents

Culturally responsive pedagogical theory was used as the theoretical framework in a North American research study of "Rosa Parks Academy" for teenage parents, the majority of whom were African American. In this study, Roxas (2008, p. 6) concluded that it is especially important for teachers of pregnant and parenting teens to:

build community among the students in their classrooms ... because for many of them, their previous experience with schools and classrooms has been one marked by a sense of alienation and lack of connection to their school, fellow classmates, and the larger community surrounding the school.

This sense of alienation was also experienced by many of the students of the Teen Parent School in my study, the majority of whom had already 'dropped out' of school before becoming pregnant. Because of this alienation or 'social exclusion' from the norms of 'mainstream'

schooling, I would argue that the third of Gay's elements of culturally responsive teaching - demonstrating caring and building communities - is fundamental to the success of all the others.

Shared pedagogical philosophy

Although the teachers and staff of the Teen Parent School were unaware of Gay's (2002, p. 109-110) pedagogical guidelines, their practice was informed by the same underpinning philosophy that:

1. "Teachers have to care so much about [their] students and their achievement that they accept nothing less than high-level success from them and work diligently to accomplish it".
2. The partnership between teachers and students must be "anchored in respect, honor, integrity, resource-sharing, and a deep belief in the possibility of transcendence".
3. Teachers "build toward academic success from a basis of cultural validation and strength ... [and] emphasise holistic ... learning".

In my interviews with teachers of the Teen Parent School, they talked about the aspirational goals they held for their students. They shared the aim of lifting educational achievement through the "building of community" (Roxas, 2008, p. 6), and the affirmation of students' cultural identity as young parents and as young women. How successful the School was in this goal is measurable, not simply by quantifying academic results and outcomes, but by exploring the degree of comfort, affirmation and acceptance the young parents felt as members of the school community or whānau, and the impact this had on their aspirations and their identities.

Māori culturally responsive pedagogical theories

The commitment of culturally responsive pedagogical theories to multicultural education has some detractors, who do not support the use of one educational approach to diverse cultures and ethnicities such as Native American Indian, Latino, African American, and so on. However, the culturally responsive theories which I have chosen to frame the classroom practices of the School for Teenage Parents are those developed by Māori educational theorists for the New Zealand cultural context. Māori culturally responsive pedagogical theories have the specific goal of lifting the educational achievement of Māori students, alienated within 'mainstream' monocultural classroom environments. Their focus is on bicultural solutions within the context

of bicultural partnership, which defines New Zealand's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi.

Te Kotahitanga Professional Development Programme

One model of culturally responsive pedagogy, devised after extensive consultation with students, whānau members, and teachers (Bishop & Glynn, 1999), is the research and professional development programme, Te Kotahitanga. This model identifies the relationships between teachers and students as the most powerful means of achieving educational success for Māori students (Bishop, et al., 2009). The authors argue that these relationships must be based upon caring for students as culturally-located individuals, caring for their performance, and employing a wide range of culturally responsive classroom practices to achieve good results. According to Bishop et al. (2009, p. 739) “deficit theorising” has no place in Māori theories of successful classroom practice. This “limits student progress, [whereas] agentic thinking [by which teachers accept the importance of their pedagogical practices] promotes student learning”.

Bishop et al. (2009, p. 737) have drawn up an “Effective Teacher Profile” to guide teachers in culturally responsive classroom practice in the New Zealand context. This includes:

1. a commitment to manaakitanga, the “building and nurturing [of] a supportive and loving environment;
2. mana motuhake, or “the development of personal and group identity” with high aspirations;
3. whakapiringatanga, the creation of “a secure, well-managed learning environment”;
4. wānanga and ako, or the use of “effective teaching interactions with Māori students as Māori”, and with all learners; and
5. kotahitanga, or “a collaborative response” to improving educational achievement for Māori students.

The Effective Teacher Profile “creates a learning context that is responsive to the culture of the child”, who can bring his/her knowledge to the classroom in complete safety (Bishop, et al., 2009, p. 741).

The Hikairo Rationale, the Educultural Wheel and other culturally responsive theories

Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh, and Bateman (2007) have also utilised culturally responsive theoretical frameworks in their analysis of what makes schools culturally safe for their students in Aotearoa New Zealand. Macfarlane (2007, p. 67) argued that “[p]articipation in mainstream education in Aotearoa New Zealand has come for Māori at a cost of their own language and culture”. He proposes that when curriculum and pedagogy are developed “that will protect their knowledge, language, values, beliefs and practices”, schools will become culturally-safe for Māori students and whānau members.

Macfarlane has developed several models to support cultural safety, including the Hikairo Rationale and the Educultural Wheel. He argues that all Māori models of culturally responsive practice identify “whakawhānaungatanga (the process of building relationships) as a key tikanga (culturally-responsive approach) for improving behavior and outcomes for Māori students” (Macfarlane, et al., 2007, p. 67). The Educultural Wheel includes whānaungatanga, or a sense of belonging, and pumanawatanga, or the beating heart, along with the broad guidelines mentioned by Bishop et al. (2009). The Hikairo Rationale draws on Durie’s ‘Whare Tapa Whā’ model of holistic well-being. At its core is “aroha or love in all its different aspects such as compassion, empathy, responsiveness and concern”. These models identify the key role of culture in the lives of students (Macfarlane, et al., 2007, p. 68).

Aroha (love) and awhinatanga (loving support)

The Teen Parent School’s philosophy was developed independently of these pedagogical theories, which I first came across in the final two years of my directorship of the School. Its philosophy was, however, motivated by similar concerns about the alienation, marginalisation and educational underachievement of a defined group of young people, in this case teenage parents, a significant number of whom were Māori. The School’s emphasis on the importance of loving support and “unconditional positive regard” (Rogers, 1951) shared much in common with Māori educational theories and practices. Such attitudes are not commonly articulated in Western pedagogical theories but find ample expression within Māori pedagogies, whose understandings of human nature identify the importance of aroha (love), awhi (support) and whānau (family) to well-being.

Teenage parents as an identifiable sub-group

It is important to note that, whilst developed specifically to improve the experience and achievements of Māori students, the pedagogical practices identified by Te Kotahitanga (and by other culturally responsive models) have also been found to improve the results of other alienated students, regardless of ethnicity (Bishop, et al., 2009, p. 738). The New Zealand Ministry of Education strategy, Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2008) also affirms that what is good for Māori is good for all students. My study contends that the principles and practices of these theoretical frameworks are applicable, not just to Māori, but to all students, particularly to those who have experienced alienation within their wider community. After all, culture is not defined by ethnicity alone, and the students of the Teen Parent School were all members of an identifiable sub-group, that of teenage parents. Although the Pākehā (European) young parents had not experienced the poisonous effects of racial prejudice, colonisation and the denial of the intrinsic value of their ethnic knowledge and identity, many had been alienated by mainstream educational practices, and had also experienced socio-economic disadvantage and family adversity. Māori and Pākehā students, alike, lived within a dominant culture which, by and large, disapproved of their ‘choice’ to become parents at a young age.

Therefore these models of culturally responsive pedagogical practice are useful in contextualising the philosophy and work of the Teen Parent School and the role of its teachers; and in identifying the extent to which Māori and Pākehā students felt they were supported in the development of positive identities by the cultural practices of the School. Whilst some academics (who chose not to be named) have questioned the universal relevance of such time- and culture-specific theoretical frameworks, this, to me, is their great advantage, because they speak directly to the social and cultural context of my research participants and of the School for Teenage Parents.

Critique of Māori culturally responsive pedagogical theories

Critics of Māori culturally responsive pedagogies argue that structural inequalities, resulting from powerful discourses of colonialism and mono-culturalism, are uncontested by these models, which propose that teacher-student relationships are the most important factor in raising Māori student achievement. Gutschlag (2007), for example, states that the theoretical framework, underpinning Te Kotahitanga, fails to acknowledge the wider context of Māori student

underachievement and the negative effects of historical links between culture, ethnicity, class and the education system. She contends that ‘teacher agency’, within the classroom context, “will have little real effect on achievement if the significance of these links is not understood” (p. 6).

The classroom as a site of transformation

I acknowledge the validity of these concerns. However, it is this very belief, implicit in Māori culturally responsive theories and in the work of the Teen Parent School - that the microcosm of the classroom can create positive change for students without changing the macrocosm of the wider community outside the school - which constitutes the relevance of these theories. Whilst this view may not accord with those of critical social theorists or macro-level Marxist philosophy, it vindicates the endeavours of educational experimentation, and the power of these endeavours to create personal and social transformation. This is a view shared by formative thinkers such as Bronfenbrenner (2005), and acknowledged by social constructionist perspectives. These theoretical frameworks are therefore useful in analysing the extent to which the Teen Parent School was successful in its attempts to positively reframe the lives and identities of its students as young parents, as learners and as young people, by offering alternative ‘narratives of identity’.

In this chapter, I have discussed my venture into the ‘universe of discourse’ which comprises social and educational theory. I have outlined my own theoretical genealogy, and the theoretical frameworks such as social constructionism, biographical theories of identity, Māori theories of human development and culturally responsive pedagogies, which I have selected to frame the analysis of my research data. I will now turn, in the following chapter, to a more detailed explanation of the methodological approaches I have used in my study and consider how and why narrative methodology works so well with a social constructionist perspective.

Chapter Four:

Narrative methodology, research design and the analysis of data

When you have decided on a topic ... you will be in a position to consider how to collect the evidence you require. The initial question is not “Which methodology?” but “What do I need to know and why?” Only then do you ask “What is the best way to collect information?” and “When I have this information, what shall I do with it?” (Bell, 1999, p. 63).

I have used Bell’s guideline, regarding the choice of methodology, to structure this chapter. I explain what I intended to investigate in this study, how and why I approached the data collection in certain ways and, in particular, my choice of narrative approaches, which have also determined my methods of data analysis. I outline the design of my research study, and introduce the research participants. I also discuss some ethical considerations relevant to my study, as well as issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research.

I: What did I want to investigate?

Having worked for a number of years in the School for Teenage Parents, I was interested to investigate the longer term influence of the School on the lives of the young women who were its students. Had the School been successful in its vision of positively transforming their lives (Hindin-Miller, 2006b)? If it had been successful, in what ways had this happened, and if it hadn’t been successful, why not?

In order to fully consider how the School had influenced the young women, it would be necessary to investigate their lives and formative experiences before they attended the School – their childhood and family experiences, schooling, adolescence, relationships, pregnancy, aspirations, sense of self, and so on. I would need to investigate the young women’s experiences of the School and how they felt these had affected their lives, if at all. And, of course, I would need to investigate what had happened in their lives since leaving the School. What were they all doing now, with regard to personal and family life, ongoing education and careers, and plans for the future? Did they feel that the School had influenced their lives in the longer term, and if so, in what ways?

I was interested in speaking to young women who had left the School some time ago and were getting on with their lives, ‘out in the world’. In a sense, the participants and I were in a similar position: we had all left the School several years earlier, and would be reflecting back on memories and experiences of a period of several years when we had all belonged to the same school community or whānau. I liked the sense of ‘distance’ that having left the School might provide us – an emotional distance and perspective, less affected by the intense day to day immediacy of the School experience. This might enable the young women to reflect on this experience within the context of lives lived before, during and after the School. For myself, the emotional distance might assist me to investigate the School almost as an ‘outsider’, although, in fact, I had been an ‘insider’, embedded in the School’s community prior to retiring from my role as Director at the end of 2008.

II: Qualitative approaches

From my review of the relevant literature, I was aware that the field of research into teenage pregnancy and parenting had been dominated, over the past 40 years, by quantitative research from a largely health-framed perspective (Wylie, 2009). A significant body of New Zealand research, conducted primarily by Fergusson, Woodward and Horwood (2000; 2003; 2001; 2009), had utilised birth cohort data (children born in the 1960s and 70s) for its analysis, and I questioned whether conclusions drawn from the data were still relevant to the teenage parents of my study - young people born in the 1980s and 90s. Whilst quantitative research had been useful in providing an overview of the demographics and contexts of teenage pregnancy, qualitative research was needed to provide the ‘rich descriptions’ of these young people’s lived experiences which were missing from the discourse and interpretations accompanying quantitative data. It was my intention that my research would provide these ‘rich descriptions’ by attempting “to uncover the lived realities and constructed meanings” of my participants (Mutch, 2005, p. 43). I would be asking the young women to share memories and reflections of life experiences before, during and after they had attended the School for Teenage Parents. Qualitative approaches to data collection would therefore be most appropriate for this purpose.

I considered many methods for collecting data for my study and decided to use one to one and focus group interviews with the young women, family members (whānau) and teachers from the School. Some analysis of documents would also be used to support my qualitative research

findings, as well as content from my own research journals. I also considered surveying former students, but abandoned this approach because of the difficulties involved in accessing a statistically meaningful number of former students, many of whom had changed address and contact details since leaving the School.

Narrative methodology

In order to best answer the research question posed in my study, I decided to use a narrative methodological approach to the gathering and analysis of data about the storied lives and experiences of a number of former students of the School. This would enable me to explore how these young parents had understood and experienced the cultural setting of the School community and its practices, between the years of 2005 and 2008, and how they storied its influence upon their lives.

What is narrative?

Narrative is a uniquely human behaviour, in which we draw on story forms and conventions to structure and make sense of life experiences and personal identities, both to ourselves and to others. We live our lives by stories, and are so skilled at using narratives that this practice would seem to be almost as natural as language itself (Bruner, 2002, p. 3). Narrative is “a universal form of human sense making” (Riessman, 2008a, p. 154). Bruner (2002) argues that we are only able to live as collective beings because of our “capacity to organize and communicate experience in narrative form ... Story is the coin and currency of culture” (p. 16).

There are many contested definitions of narrative and many kinds of text which can be viewed as narrative in form. The narratives we tell are often highly selective accounts of events and experiences, and always have a conscious or unconscious purpose. Typically, they structure events chronologically, and their content and expression are affected by audience as well as narrator (Riessman, 2008b, p. 3).

Narrative research

Narrative research is a qualitative methodology which utilises the propensity of humans for story-telling, in order to access the lived experiences of participants and the meanings they give to these experiences (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006, p. 28). Researchers who undertake narrative research do so because of their interest in “people as embodiments of lived stories” (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000) and because of the richly-layered ‘data’ these stories provide. The interpretation and presentation of narrative research may also utilise storied forms (Gudmundsdottir, 1996, p. 295).

Narrative research has a long history in the social sciences, and has become a diverse and complex methodology (Riessman, 2008a, p. 154). This complexity extends to definitions of what constitutes a ‘narrative’, diverse theoretical understandings of the meaning and signification of narratives, and a variety of analytic approaches to narrative research, including thematic, structural and dialogic analysis which I will discuss in more detail in the subsequent section on how I have analysed my data.

Riessman (2008b, p. 5) defines research narratives as ranging from chronologically structured answers in response to single, topically-specific questions to entire life stories which the researcher develops from a variety of data sources, including interviews. In the middle of this range are life accounts which are constructed between the participant and the researcher over a number of interviews. Research narratives can also include the interpretive accounts of interviews and of the research process by the researcher, as well as the narratives that readers of these accounts construct (Riessman, 2008b, p. 6). My research includes life accounts and the interpretation of these accounts.

Fitness for purpose

I decided that the range of personal data about the young women’s lives, which my research question required, could best be collected through a form of life story approach using interviews to access the young women’s stories and lived experiences. From my work with the young women at the School, I had had the privilege of hearing many stories – wonderful, shocking, inspiring, uplifting and anguishing stories of life and death, relationships, conflict, families, aspirations, and hopes for the future.

Mostly, these stories had been shared with me in one to one conversations in the classroom, the young women’s homes, or in my office at the School. I had also had the pleasure of being present on a number of occasions in which some of these young women had publicly shared their stories: at School Prize Giving celebrations, fund-raising events, during visits from public

officials, and at meetings of community groups, interested to learn more about the work of the School.

With the young women's permission, I wanted to share these intensely personal and extraordinary stories in the wider context of my research, and, as Gray (1998, p. 12) affirmed, narrative methodology seemed to be the best approach for this purpose.

Giving voice to the 'silenced'

The young women, who agreed to be my research participants, shared a sense of pride in themselves and their personal achievements, and wanted to advocate on behalf of other teenage parents. They welcomed the opportunity to speak out about their experiences, in a form of counter narrative to the negative attitudes they had experienced as teenage parents. I was also enthusiastic about the advocacy role of my research, and the opportunity it provided to represent the voices of this group of marginalised young people (Trahar, 2006, p. 20), whose educational and social needs had been inadequately served within the conventional contexts of school and other social settings, and who were widely regarded as an undesirable social problem.

Narrative research in education

Some educational research has utilised narrative methodology in order to give 'voice' to the experiences of teachers and of learners, because these voices have been under-represented in the arena of educational change and policy debate (Barone, 2007; Goodson, 2008). The learners and teachers in my study were enthusiastic about the opportunity to talk about the School. They had much to say about the differences between the cultures of the Teen Parent School and of conventional school settings.

Accessing the voices and experiences of learners in educational contexts can enhance the possibilities of educational change, particularly for 'minority groups' or for learners, marginalised in mainstream educational contexts. Goodson (1992) describes the power of individual learners' stories to effect educational change, especially when they are contextualised into a form of mega-story by the researcher. Plummer (2001) also identifies the opportunity for a "collective tale" to emerge when a group of people, in this case teenage parents, "speak about a common theme in their lives" (p. 31). One of the emerging themes of my research was the potential for the refashioning of identities that was enabled by the experience of attending the

School for Teenage Parents. This mega-story, or collective tale of transformation, is both a hopeful and positive counter narrative about young women as teenage parents, and about their unique educational and social needs.

I was also interested in accessing the voices and experiences of teachers of the School and its Early Childhood Centre to hear how they compared their experiences of working in conventional school settings with those at the School for Teenage Parents. Narrative methodology could enable my research to get beyond the “surface realities ... to the deep[er] structures of schooling” (Goodson & Walker, 1991, p. xiii), such as the experience of community and personal relationships which are so important to the quality of the educational experience for teachers and learners.

Epistemological congruence with the study’s other theoretical perspectives

As well as being ‘fit for purpose’, I selected a narrative research approach because of my epistemological understanding that we live our lives by the stories available to us within the contexts of our families, our cultural groups, our school environments, and our wider social settings. Du Plessis, Higgins, and Mortlock (2004, p. 285) describe the ontological significance of narratives as “the practices through which people make sense of their lives, constitute their identities and know ‘what to do’ ... [They provide] a unique perspective on the intersection of the individual, the collectivity, the cultural and the social”. This understanding fits well with the theoretical frameworks drawn on in my research: those of social constructionism, Durie’s theories of human development, and Māori culturally responsive pedagogical theories.

Narratives as a form of social construction

As already proposed in Chapter Three, there is complementarity between the use of narrative methodology and the theoretical paradigm of social constructionism. This is exemplified in the social constructionist view of the importance of language and discourse in the social construction of knowledge. The narratives we tell ourselves and others about our lives are, after all, a social construction. They are not fixed, or even anchored, necessarily, in some form of ‘truth’ or objective reality, but change according to the contexts and circumstances of our lives.

It is important, therefore, to acknowledge the influence of ‘local context’ - the interaction between the researcher and her participants - on the stories that are told in narrative research

interviews. Stories are socially constructed (or co-constructed) in this context and “vary in content, structure, style, and performance according to the teller’s perception of the identity, role and interest of the researcher” (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006, p. 42). The influence of ‘local context’ on the co-construction of stories, therefore, requires reflexivity on the part of the researcher, and should be acknowledged in the analysis of narrative data (Andrews, et al., 2008; Riessman, 2008b).

Stories are also constructed within the wider context of culture and culturally-conventional story-lines, which people unconsciously draw upon when they story their own lives and identities (Bruner, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Watson, 2006). Thomson (2007, p. 81) argues that identities are the “story of who we are and who we will be in the future ... resourced by narratives, [and] culturally specific stories about the kind of person it is possible to be”. Without the wider context of culture, our stories would be difficult to understand. As Bruner (2002, p. 16) articulated, it is these canonical narratives “that convert[s] individual experience into collective coin which can be circulated ... on a base wider than a merely interpersonal one”. The young people in my research drew upon many ‘canonical’ and ‘cultural narratives’ in their stories of school and personal life, including those of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ students and teachers, the connection between educational qualifications and future ‘success’ in life, happy families (which comprise the model of two parents and ‘the white picket fence’ of home ownership), and contemporary models of ‘success’ as financially independent young women (Patterson, 2011; Patterson, et al., 2010).

The paradigm of social constructionism also supports the endeavours of narrative researchers to contextualise the personal stories of their participants within social, historical, political and economic settings, thereby linking what could be argued to be merely “personal troubles” to the wider context of “public issues” (Goodson, 2008, p. 14). These wider implications of narrative research can be used to contest the arguments of critics that narrative methodology is seriously flawed because of its lack of generalisability. Watson (2006, p. 61) proposes that the generalisable implications of individual stories can be further strengthened by grounding narrative research in theoretical understandings, which I have attempted to do in this study.

The connection between narrative and identities

Because we live storied lives, the narratives we tell to ourselves and others about our lives constitute our sense of self and, as such, are narratives of identity. As Bruner (2002, p. 65) states: “Self-making is a narrative art”. We become the narratives we tell about our lives. Bruner proposes that there is no ‘essential self’, and that we are constantly constructing and reconstructing our selfhood and identity according to the situations in which we find ourselves. This process is shaped by our memories of past experiences, by our “hopes and fears for the future”, and by the cultural models of selfhood which are available to us (p. 64). This understanding of identity-making complements social constructionist perspectives of subjectivities and selfhood.

My research interprets and theorises the process of identity formation in my young women participants by drawing on models of human development, biographical theories of identity, and Māori culturally responsive pedagogies to explore the influences of the contexts of family, schooling, culture and wider social factors. As MacIntyre (1981) stated: “The story of [a] life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which [you] derive [your] identity” (p. 205). Narrative and metaphor are rich repositories for the exploration of these contexts and their influence on identity (Fox, 2006, p. 47).

Narrative discourse and metaphor are also revealing of the individuality and character of the ‘personal’ voice. I have utilised narrative analysis in my study to explore the richness of the individual voices of its young women participants, as well as to develop a ‘collective tale’ from their stories of personal and social contexts, such as school and family.

Narrative as a literary form

The literary associations and analytical approaches of narrative research (Creswell, 2008, p. 512) also appealed to me, as a former scholar and teacher of English literature. Whilst sharing many common themes, the stories of the young women were redolent with their own personal voices – individual qualities of speech and metaphor, articulacy or lack thereof, varying levels of conscious or unconscious composition, and the use of narrative constructs or ‘canonical narratives’, which revealed much of their individual character and personalities. Casey (1992) stated that underpinning her narrative approach was “a respect for the authenticity and integrity of the narrator’s discourse” (p. 189). It is my narrators’ individual ‘voices’ which enhance the

richness and multi-faceted nature of the research story and give the narrative approach its particular appeal.

III: The research design

The participants

Casey (1992) said of the women she interviewed for her research: “The speaker is seen as a subject creating her own history, rather than an object of research” (p. 189). I hope that my approach to the young women, who agreed to participate in my research study, has been underpinned by a deep respect for their personhood, and for their intimate and richly personal stories.

The young women

Eighty nine young parents had been enrolled at the School for Teenage Parents at some time between the years of 2005 and 2008, the time frame of my study. For the purposes of my study, I decided that I wanted to interview students who had attended the School for two or more years, which was about the average length of enrolment for a student at that time. This restricted the range of possible research participants to approximately forty students, from whom I chose ten young women.

The time frame of my study ensured that all my research participants would be personally known to me, because I had worked at the School until the end of 2008. These well-established relationships were an important aspect of my research approach, which I discuss more fully later in this chapter.

My method of selection combined opportunistic and ‘snowball’ sampling, ease of access and availability, and an attempt to interview young women who represented the full range of characteristics which could be found in the young people who had attended the School for Teenage Parents. These characteristics could be categorised under the labels of ethnicity, socio-economic status of parents (class), reasons for leaving conventional school, educational level and age at time of entry to the School, age at first pregnancy, number of children, relationship status, living circumstances, learning needs, educational level and age on leaving the School, and whānau support. I would have liked to have included at least one young man amongst my participants but neither of the two young men who were enrolled at the School, within the time

frame of my study, had attended the School for two or more years. Stake (2003, p. 153) suggested that in research such as mine, “selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance.” He identified “considerations of access, and even [of] hospitality” (p. 154) as providing these opportunities to learn.

In my selection of participants, other qualities such as fluency of expression were not a criterion. From my experience of working with young women at the School, I knew that each one was the repository of rich and fascinating stories which would be shared in her own inimitable ‘voice’, even if moderated through the co-constructive process of our interviews.

I approached my potential participants through a combination of phone calls, texts and emails. From my experience of working with young women, I did not expect them to be enthusiastic about reading lengthy Information and Consent Forms, or to fill out forms on their own without the opportunity for face to face discussion and clarification. I was also active in following up on my initial contact with them, rather than expecting them to call me back once they’d received the Information Forms by email or post. Texting was, of course, the preferred and most effective method of communication because of the age of the young women. I later concluded that, had I been a ‘Facebook’ member, this would have greatly expanded my range of contacts. The young women’s use of social media, such as Facebook, was helpful in securing at least one of my participants.

Jade: My first participant was Jade, whom I selected because of her age, and because I happened to have her home phone number. I called and left a message with her mother, asking her to phone me back. I have included a research journal entry made after my initial approach to Jade, which captures the nature of our phone conversation and my excitement at the prospect of securing my first research participant.

Research Journal entry: 17/07/09

Jade’s just returned my call regarding being a research participant. I was very careful to present information to her about my research, her possible involvement, ethical considerations like protecting her confidentiality, etc, so that she could feel free to participate or not, without any pressure from me. I told her I would email her the

'Information for Participants' and the 'Consent Form' so that she could think about what she would be getting involved in. Then I would contact her again re her decision. We chatted about her family and what she's doing now. She told me she's considering changing her career plans. I told her about my research plans, my readings in the field, and we discussed the need for young parents to be heard in the research literature. Jade said she thought the interviews would be like therapy! I laughed and said that I wasn't sure what they'd be like – if I interviewed her, it would be my first interview!

We chatted some more, and then I emailed her the research info. It was lovely talking to her. I feel excited about the possibility of her being my first participant. I remember she's done some beautiful writing about her son and motherhood, which I'd love to include in my work!! Yippee! Now I'll just have to wait for her response.

Andy: My second participant, Andy, was selected because, in a way, she had provided the impetus for my research question. She had left the School several years earlier and I had met up with her again at the wedding of another former student who was Andy's closest friend. Whilst we chatted, Andy had told me what she was doing in her life: working full-time, completing a tertiary qualification, and raising her two children. When I expressed my amazement at her work load and commitments, she had replied: "That's what you taught us at the School – time management, goal setting, organisation skills ..." I remember feeling, at the time, that I would love to tell her story; it was such a tale of triumph over adversity. Andy also proved easy to locate because I had occasional contact, in a work context, with a member of her extended family.

Tatiana: My third participant was an opportunistic contact. I had been visiting another former student whom I had intended to invite to participate in my research. During our visit, it became apparent to me that interviewing this young woman over several occasions would be difficult for us both because she was constantly surrounded by friends and family members and never on her own. It was she who suggested that I visit Tatiana so that I could meet her second child, whom Tatiana was looking after at the time. She gave me Tatiana's contact details and I dropped in on her on my way home.

Kate: I selected Kate because of her unusual family circumstances, and again because of ease of access. I remembered where her mother worked and made initial contact with Kate through her. It was Kate who also suggested my next participant.

Sam: After my first interview with Kate, she had talked about my research with her friend, Sam, another former student of the School. Sam expressed an interest in being involved, and I had my fifth participant. This is an example of the ‘snowball’ sampling method, which Davidson and Tolich (1999, p. 35) describe in the following way: “a small band of likely informants having been identified, these informants are relied on to generate contacts with other people who share the activity that the researcher is interested in exploring”. This method was also to be useful in accessing another of my participants, Zena.

At this point, having already interviewed four of my participants on at least one occasion, I went back to the School’s enrolment records in order to access other former students’ contact details. Using a form of scattergun approach, I texted another twelve young women, and invited them to consider participating in my study.

Anahera and Emma: Through this approach, I successfully recruited Anahera and Emma, whose contact details hadn’t changed since leaving the School, and who both replied to my text message. I include part of Anahera’s text response expressing her interest in participating, in part because her enthusiasm was characteristic of the young women whom I approached, and also because of her engaging text style.

Heya Jenny, I wud defn8ly b interestd. Howeva I am in [another town] on a placement this term wiv 5 wks left to go ...

Throughout this process of approaching potential participants, I kept a form of running record of the various participant attributes that I wanted to represent in my research. Through this method, I decided that, for balance, I needed another participant with relatively modest academic achievements, when compared with several of the other young women, such as Kate and Andy (Stake, 2003).

Zena: It was in this way that I selected Zena. Her contact details were given to me by another former student, who had learned about my research through a Facebook entry and had sent me an

email. I was unable to include this former student in my research because she had left the School in 2004.

Rachel: I selected Rachel to participate in a focus group interview with Jade and Anahera because I thought that these three young women would be comfortable to be interviewed as a group, and they concurred with my choice.

Huia: And finally, having interviewed all of the young women already mentioned, I selected Huia in an attempt to find a differing perspective on the School. As Stake (2003) had suggested, it is “better to learn a lot from an atypical case than a little from a seemingly typical case” (p. 152). Huia’s attendance at the School had been erratic and she had finally stopped attending after less than a year’s enrolment. From my point of view, the School had not been able to adequately accommodate Huia’s needs, and her leaving had been a less-than-successful outcome. She, however, had a different opinion, as I was to discover in our interviews.

After interviewing Huia, and being surprised by her positive attitude to the School, I had hoped to interview another former student of the School who, according to one of my participants, had recently been convicted of drink-driving offences. At this stage, I was still hoping to find another perspective of the School which might bring something new to my study. Unfortunately I was unable to locate this young woman and, at this point, I discontinued my search for further participants because of time constraints.

A period of twelve months had passed from my initial approach to my first participant, Jade, to my interview with my final participant, Huia. I had transcribed each interview soon after conducting it, and preliminary analysis of the interview influenced subsequent questions of that, and other participants. Each interview also informed my selection of later participants. The whole process of locating and interviewing participants had been an organic exploration and learning for me as a new researcher.

Whānau members

When I had completed my interviews (typically three one hour interviews) with the six young women who shared their life stories for my study, I asked them to nominate someone (usually a member of their family) whom I could interview about the possible influence on their lives of the School for Teenage Parents. As a result, I interviewed two mothers, three long-term partners, and

one friend. Although I had met the mothers and the partners of the young women on a number of occasions including Prize Giving ceremonies and other events at the School, our relationships were certainly not as close as those I enjoyed with the young women who were my research participants. I have included a research journal entry in which I reflect on the effect I felt that this had on the interview process, particularly in the case of the three male partners of the young women participants.

Research Journal entry: 24/05/10

I have been struck by how reticent the partners of the young women I've interviewed have been, and how much more work and conversation I've had to put into these short interviews to get anything back! I am also struck by how forthcoming and articulate my young women are, in comparison with their partners. This tells me something about young men AND more importantly about how different it is from interviewing people with whom you already have a close and established relationship, a lot of common ground and shared experience – as I do with the young women.

As with the young women, I sent or gave each of these whānau members an Information Form and letter about my research, and the Consent Form.

Teachers and Early Childhood Teachers

I decided to interview other members of the School's community to investigate those aspects of the School's culture which they thought had contributed to a positive and supportive learning environment for the young women and their children. I was also interested to investigate whether there were aspects of the School's culture that they regarded as unsupportive. As well, I was interested to explore any similarities or differences between the culture and practices of the School for Teenage Parents and its Early Childhood Centre and those of other conventional schools where they had worked.

I conducted a focus group interview with six teachers of the School's Early Childhood Centre, after completing the two interviews of my Pilot Study with Jade. I also subsequently interviewed three classroom teachers from the School, in individual face to face interviews. As I explain in the following section on how I analysed my research data, I decided to remove almost all of the

data gathered from participants, other than the young women, from the final presentation of my findings.

Data collection methods

Pilot Study

I conducted a Pilot Study of two face to face (kanohi ki te kanohi) semi-structured interviews with Jade. I learned a number of useful lessons from this experience. Firstly, I realised that Jade had not really been away from the School for long enough (only nine months) for the kind of reflective understanding of the School experience within the context of a life lived before, during and after the School, which I was seeking in my study. This influenced my selection of subsequent participants. Also my chronological sequencing of questions didn't flow well and, as a result, I decided to focus my first interview with my young women participants on the School, and use subsequent interviews to explore what the young women were doing now in their lives, as well as their life experiences prior to coming to the School. Because the School was the ground of our shared experience, this seemed a comfortable and natural context with which to begin.

I was also concerned that Jade had not really shared many stories with me in our interviews and this caused me to revisit and alter some of my interview questions, a process that I continued to undertake throughout the duration of my data collection. Whilst transcribing my interviews, I realised that I had missed a number of opportunities to probe for fuller responses, and paid more attention to this technique in later interviews. I was also aware that the interviews felt constrained on both my part and that of Jade, and reflected that this may have been because I was behaving very differently from the person she had known at the School. I was more formal and less familiar than usual, and I felt that this had made Jade feel somewhat awkward and nervous during our first interview. Again I allowed myself to act in a more natural and spontaneous way in subsequent interviews, which became more like the “conversational partnerships” described by Rubin and Rubin (2005) in their work on qualitative interviewing. As a result, I felt that subsequent participants enjoyed the interview process more than Jade had.

When I asked for her feedback on the interview experience, Jade told me that she would have preferred to have had the questions in advance, and I followed her advice, offering this option to the other young women. Most chose not to take up the offer.

And finally I was relieved to learn that Jade had enjoyed the process of reflection required by the interview questions. I was struck by her confidence to voice her opinions, even when these might have seemed to her to be potentially uncomfortable for me as a former Director of the School. As an example, Jade observed that “Jenny was too soft”, when I asked her how she felt that the School had handled conflict between the young women (an issue which she identified as something that she hadn’t enjoyed). I was impressed with her confidence to offer this opinion, amused at the way she had managed the possibility of discomfort by talking about me in the third person (something which was also to occur in an interview with another young woman), and relieved that it indicated that my participants might feel perfectly capable of saying what they really felt, without constraint. This was an important learning for me because I was anxious that all my participants should feel comfortable and unconstrained to voice their opinions, and I reiterated this throughout our interviews. It occurred to me that my fear that they may worry about my response to their real opinions was potentially patronising, and I was delighted that Jade, whom I regarded as somewhat diffident by nature, was possessed of such confidence. I will discuss, in more detail, the influence of the interviewer-participant relationship in the following sections on ethical considerations, and the analysis of data.

Semi-structured face to face interviews

I selected face to face interviews because these were the most appropriate way to gather the stories, opinions and experiences of the young women who were my research participants. Interviews are the groundwork of narrative methodology, and allow in-depth and personal sharing over an extended period of time, in this case, at least three hours of interviews with the six young women whose life stories I investigated. They were also, in a sense, a continuation of conversations we had had in the past and, because of this, were a familiar and less intimidating experience for the participants.

I decided upon the use of semi-structured interviews because these provided some structure to the interviews and would also facilitate the later analysis of interview data. The questions I asked are included in Appendix C. Although I had my written questions with me at each interview, and

these guided the range of topics which were covered, I was somewhat flexible in the use of these questions and tried to allow for a natural, conversational style, which enabled me to be responsive to the content and sharing of my participants. At the end of each interview, I also asked my participants if there was anything we had not talked about that they would like to discuss.

I gave my participants the choice of where and when it would suit them to be interviewed and, apart from my Pilot Study interviews with Jade, and my second Focus Group interview (all of which took place in the School's social work office), the young women participants chose to be interviewed at home. On a number of occasions, the children of the young women were also at home and I commented on this in another of my research journal entries.

Research Journal entry: 4/05/10

I've been really impressed with the competent, conscientious and in some cases 'outstanding' parenting I've been privileged to observe – and specially the ways the young women speak to their children. I've also been struck by how lovely the children are, and how well cared for! What a privilege this experience has been for me. I've loved it!

Focus group interviews

I used focus groups on three occasions during the gathering of my research data. The first occasion was my interview with the Early Childhood Centre teachers and I used this approach for their convenience, because they were all very busy. The second focus group was undertaken with three young women participants, Rachel, Anahera and Jade, who were interviewed for the specific purpose of checking and verifying themes which had emerged from my individual interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The third focus group interview was also undertaken as a form of member check, to give the six young women whom I had interviewed, in depth, the opportunity to verify or contest the themes I had identified in our interviews. Only three of these young women were able to participate, the other three excusing themselves because of family commitments. I had prepared for this interview by sharing with each young woman the summaries of transcripts of our individual interviews. In the focus group interview, I offered my understandings of the common themes emerging about the School and checked for their agreement on these themes of identity, the

importance of supportive relationships, and so on. I also asked several further questions about their relationships with teachers in order to amplify and enrich my data on this theme. As well I asked about the young women's 'personal success' because this had struck me as a common theme in our interviews and I was interested to learn how they responded to this concept. And I asked the young women how they felt about my use of a whakatauki (proverb) which I felt encapsulated my research: "That which is nurtured, blossoms and grows". All three responded with enthusiasm to the sentiment underlying this whakatauki.

I was aware that the dynamics of a focus group are quite different from those of individual interviews. One of the advantages of this approach is that the role of the researcher is diminished, because she is outnumbered by her participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In the focus group interviews with the young women participants, I experienced the co-constructive narrative potential of this approach when the participants are well-known to each other and have shared a number of life experiences. This produced some interesting data about the School's encouragement of the practice of reading to children, which the young women spoke of with enthusiasm. It also produced new data about how the young women constructed concepts of success and the agentic self.

I was also witness to the pressure towards consensus that such an approach creates because of the social dynamics involved, "through which participants co-produce an account of themselves and their ideas" (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 43). An example of this was in their discussion of the culturally normative practice of 'binge drinking'. One of my participants wryly observed that she would be interested to hear how the young women might have responded to several of my questions when alone. I noticed that she had remained silent during the discussion about alcohol and had not felt comfortable to acknowledge that she was no longer a drinker, having overcome her own alcohol problems, whilst at the Teen Parent School. Because I used this approach after undertaking the individual interviews, I was not concerned about the seeming consensus that emerged, and was delighted with the richness of the co-constructed narratives.

Documents

I drew on a number of documents in the process of conducting my study, including the young women's Teen Parent School Enrolment and Leaving forms, their New Zealand Qualifications Authority Records of Achievement, audited Ministry of Education Roll Returns from the Teen

Parent School for the years 2005 to 2008, Background Information sheets which I had devised for the purposes of gathering a range of factual information from each participant, Personal Evaluation forms which the young women had filled out, sometimes annually, whilst at the School, newspaper clippings and magazine articles about the Teen Parent School and about several of my participants, examples of personal writing, including speeches and poems by the young women, and School newsletters. The official documents were necessary sources of data about the young women's academic achievements before, during, and in some cases, after their attendance at the School. The Enrolment and Leaving forms, as well as the Background Information forms, were useful in gathering accurate data about such details as the young women's ages when they attended the School, the ages of their children, the dates of their attendance, details of family circumstances, and so on.

IV: Ethical considerations

The relationship with participants

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the relationships which I already enjoyed with the young women participants were an important aspect of my research. Because these relationships had been based upon mutual respect, *awhi* (support), and love, the trust and rapport that would enable my participants to comfortably share their stories in our interviews were already established. This also meant that the young women were not especially interested in the Consent forms, and I had to ensure that they were fully informed of their rights, and of my responsibilities to protect these rights.

My relationships with the young women were also closer and more egalitarian than conventional teacher-student relationships (as data from the young women corroborate) and, as a result, the power disparities which normally exist within the contexts of school, and of academic research, were less present in my study. I was particularly conscious of encouraging the young women to openly express their thoughts and opinions of the School without concern, on their part, that this may upset or offend me.

I was also anxious that the teachers, with whom I'd worked for many years, should feel unconstrained in the expression of their thoughts and opinions. I have included a research journal entry, in which I reflect on my own (complex) reactions to the expression of critical perspectives

of the School by an early childhood teacher in our interview, as an indication of my awareness of this particular challenge of participant or insider research.

Research Journal entry: Feb 2011

During the interview with the ECC teachers, when L talked about the shortcomings of the School (my School) regarding bi-cultural practice, I felt uncomfortable and a bit upset. I had several reactions to what she said: 1. That it was true. I agreed with her. 2. How would she know because she wasn't really party to what happened in the School setting. 3. Uncomfortable because this was an aspect of my work that I felt very strongly about – passionate about, in fact, and to acknowledge that it hadn't been a very successful part of the School, in L's eyes, was uncomfortable for me. 4. The discomfort of hearing that this was being done better now than when I was directing the School. 5. The relief I felt that this was being done better now, because it was an area of our work that I was concerned may not be strengthened by change of leadership. So conflicted feelings indeed!!

I wrote many such entries in my research journals, reflecting upon my emotional involvement in the research process and my personal responses to participants' interviews.

The ethical implications of these pre-existing relationships, which are a component of insider research undertaken in educational institutions, have been well-discussed in the New Zealand research environment. Cullen (2005, p. 254) defines the need for a “relationships paradigm”, which broadens the focus on individual rights in academic research to include context-based relationships between individuals and groups. This is well-articulated in Māori research approaches and is described by Bishop and Glynn (1999) as *whakawhānaungatanga* – the building and maintaining of relationships. This ethical approach, which I endeavoured to bring to my own research, was consistent with the practices and culture of the Teen Parent School, as identified by its members, and with the theoretical frameworks of my study. I was particularly influenced by Smith's (1999) discussion of the need for humility on the part of the researcher:

Insider research has to be as ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position (p. 139).

One unanticipated consequence of my already-close relationships with the participants was that, mostly, we avoided talking about the significance of these relationships. In some ways this ‘silence’ constitutes a small, untold story in the study of the School. Because I was a party to these relationships, I knew how important they had been and how they had enriched each of our lives. A number of the young women had regarded me as their School ‘Mum’, and I had regarded them as my School-based family. I have included a research journal entry in which I reflected upon this untold story in my research.

Research Journal entry: 9/06/10

The untold part of our shared experience as members of the School family is our own personal relationship. Because I am interviewing them, and maybe because we are all rather reticent ‘kiwis’ (New Zealanders) when it comes to talking about our feelings for one another, we refrain from discussing our own relationship because it is too embarrassing, too intimate, too personal. The young women talk instead about their relationships with other members of staff. At moments, this reticence comes out in interesting and amusing ways: Jade – “‘Jenny’ was a bit soft”; Sam – “the Schools would only work if they had a ‘Jenny’”. And I similarly play my part by not asking them to elucidate.

Participant confidentiality

Another challenge of insider research, especially in a small country such as New Zealand, is the need to balance participants’ rights to privacy and anonymity with the importance of disseminating one’s research findings. Because I am known in the field of teenage parent education, it will be difficult to maintain the anonymity of the School in my study, and this may also make it hard to conceal the identities of some of the participants. This is also a challenge of narrative research studies, in which intimate details of the personal lives of participants are revealed. The implications of this were fully discussed with the participants, who chose their own pseudonyms (sometimes reluctantly) and read and approved the transcripts of our interviews. The pseudonym for the School, Pumanawa College, was inspired by Macfarlane’s Educultural Wheel (2007).

New Zealand researcher, Sue Middleton (1993) dealt with this same challenge in the following manner:

I had to use different names for the same women when discussing different aspects of their lives ... After the thesis was completed I did what most academics do: wrote academic papers for publication. Each time I used a woman's story, I asked her permission; I described the journal and the audience and showed her the paper (p. 79).

Although the young women participants in my research do not, as yet, share the high profile of the participants in Middleton's research, respect for their right to privacy and confidentiality is still important. I nevertheless felt conflicted about disguising their identities by changing aspects of their personal stories because this would compromise the integrity of their 'voices'. However this was less of an issue when those details were not integral to the understanding of their stories, and I used this approach on several occasions.

Cultural safety of participants

Another ethical issue, confronting me as a New Zealand Pākehā researcher (of European descent), was that of the cultural safety of my Māori participants. A number of Māori researchers have challenged Pākehā involvement in research with Māori participants because the Pākehā "point of view of Māori is filtered through their own values, circumstances, research training, privilege" (Cram, 1997, p. 50). This has resulted in the deliberate exclusion of Māori from research undertaken by some Pākehā academics, in an attempt to meet the ethical principle of 'doing no harm'. This choice was not possible for me because Māori were important members of the School's community, and their voices were a necessary component of the richness and diversity of my research.

I attempted to manage this issue by consulting with Angus MacFarlane, Professor of Māori Research at Canterbury University, throughout the conduct of my research, and by endeavouring to ensure the cultural safety of all my participants by sensitive and respectful interviewing. I had considered asking for assistance with some interviews by a former member of the School's staff who was Māori, but this was too difficult to arrange within the time constraints of my study. I was also guided by the reflection of Tolich (2002, p. 175) that:

Cultural safety is the effective research of a person/family from another culture, by a researcher who has undertaken a process of reflection on [her] own cultural identity and recognises the impact of the researcher's culture on [her] own research methods.

In the end, I decided to exclude data from several of my Māori participants' about their experience of the cultural context of the School, as Māori, because I was well-aware that my own identity as a Pākehā (European) may have affected what they felt comfortable to share with me.

Positive benefits of the research experience

It was important to me that the research experience would be positive for all of my research participants. This was not simply because of the ethical requirement of research to do no harm, but because of my personal and philosophical commitment to the well-being of the young women who had given of themselves and their time so generously for the purposes of my research. I was careful to be respectful of the young women's privacy in our interviews and avoided what Stake (2003) referred to as "low-priority probing of sensitive issues" (p. 144) .

As part of the interview process, I asked the young women how the experience of being interviewed had been for them. Although they had sometimes spoken of difficult and painful memories, none of them acknowledged feeling upset or disturbed by the experience of revisiting these memories, and a number observed that it had been helpful to reflect on and talk about experiences that they had not shared with others. Tatiana, for example, stated that she had gained new understanding of her sister's feelings and behaviours, when we discussed traumatic family events in our third interview. Zena said: "Yeah, it's been good, some things I don't really talk about that often, like childhood." And Kate observed that: "It's been interesting looking over my life." When I asked her if it had been upsetting, she replied: "No, I thought it might be but I'm in a different part of my life now". Andy was very positive about the experience of being interviewed, saying: "It's been a pleasure and I've enjoyed the opportunity to say what I think".

During the interview process I often reflected on the reciprocal nature of the research relationship, and its possible effects on the lives of my participants. I include here a research journal entry on this issue, which is an important aspect of feminist research (Skeggs, 1994).

Research Journal entry: Oct 2009

An issue of interest that came up yesterday in discussion with [two of my research colleagues] was the influence of the researcher on the lives of participants. After my initial interview with Jade about work and also about her lack of contact with the School, she decided to approach her employer about training – something she'd been avoiding doing, and was pleasantly surprised that her employer said she would like to train her. As well she visited the School and the early childhood teachers with her son, having avoided doing so since she withdrew from her training earlier in the year. These actions were most likely influenced by the interview process and by comments I had made to her outside of the interview context. Because they were positive events, they comply with the 'do no harm' ethical guidelines, and are an inevitable aspect of our pre-existing relationships.

I was also able to offer support and advice to other young women participants on issues which were challenging or concerning to them, such as Zena's worries about changing jobs. To support her in this process, I offered to act as a referee for her, an outcome which was only made possible by our contact through my research.

Several of the young women said that they were honoured to have been asked to participate in the research and keen to give something back to the School. They welcomed the opportunity to express their understandings and to have their voices heard. Several, such as Andy and Emma, also observed that the process of reflection had made them realise just how far they'd come in their lives. I felt reassured that the research experience had been positive for them, as it certainly had been for me.

V: Analysis of data

Data analysis needs two things: first, an appropriate theoretical lens through which to view and make sense of the material collected; second, appropriate tools and techniques to organize, categorise, sift and manage it. (Boden, et al., 2005, p. 46).

I approached the analysis of my data in two distinctly different ways: the more familiar approach of thematic analysis, for which the guidance of a number of qualitative researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burgess, et al., 2006; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Glesne, 1999; Mutch, 2005; Patton, 2001) was especially helpful; and the less familiar approach of narrative analysis, which was guided by skilled practitioners of narrative research (Andrews, et

al., 2008; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Bruner, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Josselson, 2011; Lips-Wiersma, 1999; Plummer, 2001; Riessman, 2008b) and included thematic, dialogic and structural analyses of storied data. I chose to use the latter approach for several reasons. Firstly, I was undertaking narrative research and was interested in the life stories of my participants. I was discomfited by the way that conventional thematic analysis disconnected extracts of data from their narrative contexts, and undermined the integrity of the individual stories, and the unique voices of their narrators. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) rather wittily observed, “Segmenting and coding may be an important, even an indispensable, part of the research process, but it is not the whole story” (p. 52).

The presentation of my findings in Chapters Five, Six and Seven uses both of these analytical approaches, for different purposes. Where I am interested in giving primacy to a theme such as pregnancy and parenthood as a turning point in the fashioning of identities, I have chosen to present my findings thematically, drawing on supporting evidence from across my data set. Where I am concerned to understand the storied identities of individual young women, I use the narrative approach so as to give primacy to their richly individual voices and understandings.

‘Interrogating’ the data

Although I conducted and transcribed thirty three interviews in total, I will describe here the process I used for the analysis of the twenty three interviews with the ten young women participants. After conducting each face to face interview, which was audio-recorded, I wrote my reflections about the interview either before or after transcribing it in full. I used these reflections, and the transcripts, to inform subsequent questions I asked of each participant in later interviews. For the twelve months in which I interviewed the participants, the process of collection, transcription and analysis of data proceeded concurrently.

Once the interviews had been transcribed, I read through the transcripts and underlined important themes, points of interest and quotable quotes. In the wide margins of my transcripts, I made notes beside text identifying topics, key concepts and themes. I summarised each transcript into key points, using interview questions as a framework, and used these key points to draw up a coding bank, employing both ‘process’ or ‘chronological’ codes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), and ‘thematic’ codes. I then reflected on themes emerging from the data, as well as themes inherent in my theoretical frameworks, returned to the data and looked for deeper themes, examples of

which included such concepts as ‘the normalisation of cultural narratives’, or ‘personal agency and its many manifestations such as anger and resistance’.

I proceeded to regroup key concepts and codes into categories, and formulated an A3 handwritten chart to try and represent all the key concepts and underlying themes emerging in the interviews. It was through this process that the theme of the fashioning of identities within the cultural contexts of the young women’s lives became evident, and I knew that I had found the organising thread and story of my research.

I then coded each interview, and started to seriously reflect upon the options for structuring and presenting my findings. At this point, I commenced the collation of data from across my data set (the interviews with all of the young women participants) into codes. I trawled through the coded data using my computer’s ‘search/find’ function, and compiled them into categories under headings, to be written up in a draft chapter on the School for Teenage Parents. I began to write this chapter, which became a big and unwieldy piece.

Research Journal entry: 20/11/10

I feel bogged down by the coded data, and concerned that it discombobulates the flow of the women’s stories too much. I feel I’m losing touch with the integrity of the ‘data’ in their more integrated form. Have decided to read my interview transcripts again. This way I can re-identify interesting comments and details, in context, that may have been lost when I amalgamated coded data under certain headings.

It was certainly a messy process, and I began to feel that I was truly criss-crossing and interrogating my data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), as urged to do by my supervisors.

Whilst I was still conducting and transcribing some of my later interviews, I also undertook the construction of a life story of one participant, Andy. I approached this chronologically, but also let themes and the flow of ideas influence the story’s structure. I excluded material which was more specifically about the School than about Andy’s storied life. My approach was guided by examples from a number of narrative and life story researchers (Douglas, Roberts, & Thompson, 1988; Duncan, 2008; Middleton, 1993; Plummer, 2001). I re-listened to my interviews; and wrote my own story of ‘knowing’ Andy, both at the School and more recently, when we had

reconnected for our interviews. I sent a copy to Andy and invited her (emailed) response, which I have included here:

Hi Jenny,

Wow, reading that was pretty cool! I had a bit of a smile most of the time I was reading it, thinking 'Gosh I can waffle on, and I say 'you know?' far too much!'

But it was a very accurate and truthful telling of my story. Im amazed you could wade your way through everything I said during my interviews and pick out the quotes you chose, because they are all the key points. Does that make sense?

I kind of felt after reading for a while that I was feeling a little detached from it because of the names, almost like I was reading someone elses story and not my own. Then I'd read something a little bit emotionally stirring for me (like my struggle to find that elusive work/life balance!) and it would feel real again. I expected to maybe cry reading it too, but I felt happy. And proud of myself too! Thank you Jenny, for putting together my story in such a lovely way. I feel honoured to have been chosen as one of the participants.

Talk to you soon, Andy

Feeling encouraged by this response, I proceeded to write a preliminary analysis of Andy's story, which confirmed for me the importance of the theme of the reframing of identities. I sent this analysis to Andy and she responded with her approval of my interpretations. However, I felt dissatisfied with my work, and decided to read a number of texts so as to be better equipped to undertake narrative analysis (Andrews, et al., 2008; Bruner, 2002; Phoenix, 2008; Riessman, 2008a, 2008b; Squire, 2008).

I spent many hours restructuring Andy's story and presenting it in several different narrative formats, informed by Riessman (2008b), to see which I felt best suited my analytical approach. I also tackled the construction of more bounded stories of two other participants - I was presenting a conference paper on my preliminary research findings, and these were the three participants with whom I had already completed my interviews. I was immersed in their stories, and wrote many reflective memos about their individual voices, narrative styles, use of literary devices, and conscious and unconscious identity construction.

Meantime, I completed my sequence of interviews with each of the other participants, and offered them a record of these in whatever form they preferred. For some it was a CD Rom, for others, the complete printed transcripts, and for others, a printed summary of the key points from our interviews. I gave each young woman the opportunity to change any part of the data, but none took up this offer. These young women were extremely busy, juggling the demands of study, work, family and personal life, and mostly, they expressed little interest in trawling through the body of data collected in our interviews. It was at this point that I conducted the two focus groups already described earlier in this chapter, as a form of external check by the young women on my analysis of the data.

After a number of false starts and much reflection on how to best present the findings of my study, I decided to follow the storied lives from childhood, through early parenthood, enrolment at the School for Teenage Parents, transition from the School, and life ‘today’ of the three young women already drawn upon for my conference presentations (Hindin-Miller, 2010a, 2010b). I would augment these stories with shorter, thematically structured excerpts from the other young women participants, with the intention of presenting a richly nuanced and compelling ‘larger story’ of the ways in which the young women’s lives and identities had been shaped and refashioned within the many cultural contexts of their lives. This chronological structure highlighted the turning point experiences of pregnancy, and re-engagement with education at the Teen Parent School, as well as the unique ways in which the three young women constructed their own identities through narrative. Because it was only the stories of the young women which could speak directly to their self-making, I made the difficult decision to remove much of the data collected from other participants, including teachers and whānau members, from the presentation of my findings.

Narrative analysis of storied data

For each of the three young woman I constructed a bounded narrative or story which spoke most clearly to those aspects of her life contexts (before, during and after her experience of the School), which she herself storied as formative. For example, in Chapter Five, which explored the narrative contexts of child-and-teenage-hood, it was Andy’s stories of family life through which she constructed her most compelling narratives of self; for Kate, it was her stories of

schooling; and for Tatiana, it was her extended story of the disintegration of her mother, and the role of alcohol and drugs in this unfolding family tragedy.

I was not concerned with the ‘objective’ veracity of the participants’ stories. As Riessman (2008b, p. 29) stated: “Like all stories, [they are] selective and perspectival, reflecting the power of memory to remember, forget, neglect, and amplify moments in the stream of experience”. Rather, my interest was in the stories themselves, as the participants chose to share them with me; and in the ways in which their identities were constituted and constructed in these narratives.

Thematic, structural and dialogic analysis

I approached the analysis of each of the young women’s narratives by considering the questions: what, how, why, for whom and for what purpose? More specifically, I undertook the following forms of narrative analysis, as defined by Riessman (2008):

1. Thematic analysis: What is she saying? What are the ‘key themes’ around which the narratives are constructed and what clues do these offer about her storied identities (Plummer, 2001); what is the deeper meaning of her narratives of self?
2. Structural analysis: How is she saying it? Is the story a tragedy or a comedy? What do we learn about her identity from her style of presentation?
3. Dialogic analysis: What impact does the narrative context, both local (the context of the interview) and social, have on her story?
4. How can we make sense of her story within the broader context of theoretical frameworks and cultural narratives?

The challenge I experienced in my use of narrative analysis was in maintaining the overall focus of my research question, whilst becoming more and more immersed in the complex richness of the participants’ stories and their delightfully individual story-telling voices. I was constantly drawn down fascinating by-ways, such as Kate’s extraordinary deployment of metaphor and, in this case, had already gathered multiple examples of this linguistic practice before acknowledging that I could not find a place for these in my thesis. Word limitations provided a constant constraint upon my work.

The dialogic nature of story-telling

In common with all ‘told’ narratives, the stories I share with you in the following chapters were co-constructed in the interview process (as well as later, in my reconstruction of them as research data). Riessman (2008, p. 50) proposes that: “Through our presence, and by listening and questioning in particular ways, we critically shape the stories participants choose to tell”. When analysing the interviews and the questions I asked, I noted that this co-constructive process influenced my interviews with participants in differing ways, as I explain when I discuss their individual stories. As Salmon stated (Salmon & Riessman, 2008, p. 31):

All narratives are, in a fundamental sense, co-constructed. The audience, whether physically present or not, exerts a crucial influence on what can and cannot be said, how things should be expressed, what can be taken for granted, what needs explaining, and so on. We now recognize that the personal account, in research interviews, which had traditionally been seen as the expression of a single subjectivity, is in fact always a co-construction.

The presentation of the participants’ narratives

Riessman (2008b) argues that “Interview segments that include contexts of production ... are generally more persuasive than quotations stripped of context” (p. 197). In order to reveal the co-constructive nature of the narratives in my study, I have incorporated the direction of my questions as well as the young women’s own words, to tell the stories they shared in our interviews. Their actual words are written in italics. Initially I also identified which interview each response was taken from but later removed these references because they added nothing meaningful, were distracting to the eye and detracted from the flow of the narratives.

I have used ‘...’ to indicate that I have chosen to leave words out of the young women’s accounts, and ‘-’ to indicate when they begin to articulate something and stop midstream. I have also used (p) to indicate long pauses. I have chosen not to include my non-lexical expressions such as ‘Mmm’ and ‘Yes’, which occurred throughout the young women’s responses, because these interrupt the narrative flow when they appear on the printed page. On rare occasions, I have also ‘tidied up’ some of their responses. For example, the inclusion of every lexical filler such as ‘you know’, which is a characteristic of Andy’s speech construction, suggests less fluency on the printed page than is actually the case in her spoken language.

In common with most of the young women I interviewed, Andy's, Kate's and Tatiana's speech is marked by the New Zealand characteristic of a rising inflexion at the end of spoken lines, which I have sometimes indicated with a '?' This does not, therefore, necessarily denote an actual question in the transcript. I have numbered the questions (and their responses) to assist the reader with my analysis of the stories.

Interview transcripts and the 'disembodied self'

An interview transcript is just that, a transcription of the spoken word in written form. What is absent in the written transcript is the physicality of the embodied self of the narrator (and of the interviewer), the tone and pace of the speaking voice, the emphases and silences which convey meaning (Riessman, 2008b). Because of this, I returned to my audio recordings of the young women's interviews and re-listened to their stories a number of times in order to hear their voices and the tone and inflexions they used in the telling of their stories, rather than simply relying on my transcripts. This greatly assisted my recall of the interviews' content and, to my surprise, enabled other 'readings' and interpretations to present themselves. It also assisted my attempts to express the speakers' individual personalities and stylistic features embedded within each transcript.

The 'embodied' presence of Andy

Unable to be captured in a written transcript is the clarity of enunciation of Andy's spoken words, and the general confidence, intelligence and reflection which she brought to everything she said. For Andy, the precise articulation of thoughts and feelings was important. As you will see, she was a skilled and fluent story teller. In our interviews, she appeared to be consciously aware of the 'dialogical' nature of her narrative, and made significant efforts to explain herself to me in ways that were coherent and consistent. Her frequent use of the expression, "you know", reflected her attempt to bring me with her on her narrative journey, and to ensure that I was a sympathetic and understanding listener. Andy was a conscious story teller, in ways that some of the other participants were not. She was clearly aware that I was interested in her family background as a context to her story of personal transformation, through her experience as a student of the Teen Parent School. Andy constructed her story in such a way as to make sense of this transformation both to herself and to me. I was also aware that our pre-existing relationship

played an important part in what Andy was prepared to share with me. A different audience would have elicited a different version of her storied self (Phoenix, 2008).

The ‘embodied’ presence of Tatiana

Throughout our interviews, Tatiana spoke in a direct, unaffected and straightforward manner, recounting her story of family conflict and tragedy without attempting to enhance its dramatic impact. There were no tears or self-pity. Tatiana smoked continually, and our interview sessions acquired the tone of intimate confessionals in which, from time to time, Tatiana would whisper an observation to me so as not to be overheard; I wondered by whom. I was fully emotionally engaged and, as with all the participants I interviewed, I felt honoured to be the recipient of Tatiana’s stories. I was particularly struck by her manner of framing even the most shocking experiences in a positive light. She had not been crushed by events that may have destroyed other less hardy individuals.

I had little sense of ‘the conscious story-teller’ in Tatiana’s narratives, which had neither the shaping and descriptive details of Andy’s stories, nor the clear causal plot-line of Kate’s. Tatiana was somewhat uncertain, even ambiguous, about the chronological order of events. I found this surprising, considering the dramatic nature of her family history. Despite her saying “I try to talk about it as much as I can”, it appeared that Tatiana’s story was not really ‘ready-formed’ in her mind and that it was, at least in part, being constructed as she talked. She would have sudden moments of illumination and insight, in a process of sense-making which suggested that perhaps she had had little opportunity to actively reflect on these powerful childhood events. Tatiana’s unique characteristic of expressing an opinion, and immediately balancing this with an opposing or qualifying perspective, confirmed my impression that her stories were unrehearsed, and that she was thinking about and interpreting their meaning, from her adult perspective, as she told them to me in our interviews. Hence the presence, in her narratives, of disjunctive voices in dialogue with each other (Josselson, 2011). Salmon’s observation (Salmon & Riessman, 2008) that “Narrative shaping entails imposing a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected” (p. 78) seemed to reflect Tatiana’s narrative experience.

The ‘embodied’ presence of Kate

Kate’s interviews were spoken in a quiet, somewhat tentative, little-girl’s voice. This is characteristic of her normal speaking voice. Kate is physically small in stature and the ‘little girl’

image that this evokes plays its part in her stories of self, as the following chapters will reveal. She often spoke hesitantly and reflectively, and thought carefully about her answers to my questions. She made no attempt to dramatise her story in any way, even though it was apparent that these memories were still painful and sometimes uncomfortable for her to share. Kate's interviews were liberally sprinkled with metaphors, a trait unique to her individual voice. She used evocative expressions to depict her own behaviours and characteristics, such as: "I was very good at slipping through the cracks", "My anxiety went through the roof", "I kinda fell off the wagon", "I couldn't organise myself out of a paper bag", "I was going the extra mile", "We made our beds and we had to lie in them". It was only in the transcribing of Kate's interviews, when these metaphors visually 'leapt off the page', that I became aware of this characteristic of her story telling.

VI: Issues of trustworthiness, rigour and validity

[G]ood narrative research persuades readers ... analytic interpretations [need to be] plausible, reasonable, and convincing ... students can ground their claims for validity by carefully documenting the processes they used to collect and interpret data ... Following a methodical path, documenting claims, and practicing reflexivity strengthens the case for validity (Riessman, 2008b, pp. 191-192)

In this chapter I have explained the narrative methodological choices made as a result of my research question and its focus on the life stories of the young women participants who were former students of the School for Teenage Parents. I have explored the complementarity of narrative research with a social constructionist perspective; and the value of narrative approaches when considering themes such as the fashioning of identities within the many contexts of life. I have discussed the research design of this study, the choice of participants, and of interview methods, as well as the analytical methods brought to bear upon the data, and a number of ethical considerations which influenced research decisions and practices. It is my hope that the rather detailed exposition of methodological choices and decisions, as well as of the methods used to collect, analyse and present the findings, will support my claims for the trustworthiness, rigour and validity of this study.

I will now proceed to the presentation and discussion of the findings, which takes place in the following three chapters: Chapters Five to Seven.

Foreword to Chapters Five to Seven:

“Tell me your story”

“Life experiences and background are the key ingredients of the person that we are, of our sense of self” (Goodson, 2008, p. 11).

Our sense of self and identity are fashioned or storied within the cultural contexts of our lives. These contexts include our families, ethnic and socio-economic groupings, schooling, and the wider dominant cultural context, discourses, and structures of the society within which we live. Each of these contexts offers narrative possibilities of self which we draw upon to story our own identities. Scott Melton (1992, pp. 82-83) suggested that “it is by locating ourselves within the multiplicity of available discourses that we develop our identity”. From a social constructionist perspective, “[w]e are all in the process of claiming and resisting the identities on offer within the various prevailing discourses” (Burr, 1995, p. 76). This is a life-long process of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’, which is strongly impacted upon by turning-point experiences (Kehily, 2007, p. 104). In the case of the young women in this study, these ‘turning-points’ included pregnancy, parenthood and the decision to return to school.

The following three chapters draw on the stories of ten young women in order to explore some of the “identities on offer” in the contexts of their lives, and to consider how the young women negotiated the narrative possibilities of these contexts.

Chapter Five:

The narrative framing of child- and teenage-hood

This chapter examines the often constraining influence of personal, familial and cultural narratives of childhood and family life, schooling and teenage-hood on the young women's identities. It culminates with their narratives of the experience of pregnancy and parenthood which, despite the negative judgements of wider society, served as turning points in their lives.

Chapter Five is divided into two parts: Part One presents narratives of childhood and family life, schooling, and early teenage-hood from six of the young women in my study: Andy, Kate, Tatiana, Emma, Zena and Sam. I have divided Part One into three sections: Childhood and family life; Schooling; and Drugs and alcohol. Each section features an extended narrative from one of the young women to show how she storied the fashioning of her identity within the narrative possibilities of this context. These narratives have been reconstructed from much longer narratives of childhood and teenage years, and are analysed using narrative analytical approaches, which are explained in the Methodology chapter. In each section, I also present a more general thematic overview of the experiences of all six young women within this context of their lives.

In Part Two, I present selections from the narratives of all of the young women participants about the personal contexts of their pregnancies, their hopes and aspirations at the time of becoming pregnant, and the influence of negative social discourses. I consider how the life changing experiences of pregnancy and parenthood acted as turning points in the lives and identities of the young women. I have chosen a thematic, rather than a narrative, approach in Part Two because my primary focus is on the theme of pregnancy as a turning point in identity formation.

The stories of childhood, which the young women chose to share with me, are not happy or nostalgic idylls of life 'growing up' in New Zealand. Rather, they are often confronting, even disturbing stories, filled with challenges, conflicts, and personal tragedies. They contain graphic incidents of family deprivation, conflict and dysfunction, 'domestic' violence, substance abuse and addiction, school failure and incompetence, suicide and bereavement. They also reveal small

acts of kindness, the durability of family bonds and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

I present these stories, not with the intention of reinforcing negative stereotypes or deficit constructions of teenage parents. Rather, I present them because these are the stories that my participants chose to share with me and I am honouring their voices by doing so. It is important to note that the young women have not constructed their stories as tragedies, and neither do they perceive themselves as victims. Rather, these are hopeful stories of resourcefulness and survival, and of small but important triumphs over adversity. They reveal the capacity of these young women to resist and overcome challenges and to successfully negotiate the ‘identities’ on offer in the many contexts of their lives, especially when they are supported to do so.

I have utilised narrative and thematic analysis, in this chapter, to explore something of the richness of the individual voices and identities of the young women participants, as well as to develop a form of ‘collective tale’ from their stories of family life, schooling, and teenage-hood in a New Zealand context. In this way, I have attempted to honour my participants as individuals, whilst at the same time enabling their stories to function as a form of ‘testimonio’, or “stories told by the less powerful, in a collective mode where one person’s story ‘stands in’ for many others” (Squire, 2008, p. 55). Drawing on the ‘life story’ work of Kenneth Plummer, Squire argues:

[Stories] build collective identities that can lead, albeit slowly and discontinuously, to cultural shifts and political change. Personal stories thus often operate as bids for representation and power from the disenfranchised (p. 55).

It is my hope, and that of the young women who participated in this study, that their stories will serve this broader purpose.

Part One:

***“I wouldn’t say it was the best time in my life”*: Formative stories of childhood, schooling, and being a teenager**

I: Childhood and family life

Six little girls at home

I commence this section with my reconstruction of the family background and circumstances of each of the six young women who feature in this chapter.

Andy’s family background

Andy grew up in a state-housing area of the city, the third of four daughters. Her older sisters were ten and seven years her senior and her younger half sister was ten years her junior. Her immediate family was completed by her mother and father, who divorced when Andy was two years old, and her step-father, who eventually married her mother when Andy was fourteen. Andy’s mother and older sisters worked part-time as cleaners, and her father worked in a factory. Neither of her parents, nor her older sisters completed high school, and Andy’s mother and older sisters were all teenage parents.

Tatiana’s family background

Tatiana was the second of three children, born to very young teenage parents. Neither parent had completed secondary school, but Tatiana’s mother subsequently studied a horticulture course. The family lived in straitened financial circumstances, moving to a semi-rural environment when Tatiana was about nine years old. The parents married around this time and separated when she was twelve. Late childhood was marked by family conflict and by her mother’s increasingly uncontrolled use of drugs and alcohol. Tatiana’s mother committed suicide when Tatiana was thirteen.

Kate’s family background

Kate grew up in a supportive, middle-class family with university-educated, professional parents, whose marriage is still intact. Kate has positive memories of a happy, loving and safe childhood. Her mother is a successful career woman whose demanding work was, at times, stressful for the family. Her only sibling, an older sister, has a PhD. The context of a high-achieving family made

Kate's identity as a school 'drop-out' and parenting teen unusual in my cohort of students at the Teen Parent School.

Emma's family background

Emma was the second of four children and the only daughter. Raised in relatively comfortable financial circumstances in a semi-rural community, Emma's mother worked as a cleaner throughout her childhood and her father, who had completed secondary school, held a position of some responsibility in the local community. The family were ardent and successful players of sport. In retrospect, Emma thinks that her own interest in sport was an attempt to gain her father's attention in a family dominated by boys. Emma experienced what she would describe as a fairly normal childhood. Her parents eventually separated whilst she was attending the Teen Parent School.

Sam's family background

The younger of two children, Sam was brought up in a family marked by domestic conflict and financial stresses resulting from her father's addiction to gambling, alcohol and drugs. Sam experienced this conflict as "normal", because it was what she was used to. Both parents worked, and Sam's mother now holds a position of responsibility in a successful local company. Sam was her father's "sweetie-pie" as a little girl, but became estranged from him as she grew older. The parents eventually separated, to Sam's relief, when she was at Intermediate School and her mother formed a new partnership when Sam was in her teens. Sam's father committed suicide two years after she left the Teen Parent School.

Zena's family background

Zena was brought up in deprived social and material circumstances in a small rural community, where her parents worked as horticultural labourers. She was the second of four daughters, but assumed the role of the oldest child because her older sister had been born with cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Zena's mother was a teenage mother, having her first daughter when she was sixteen. Zena's father, who was ten years her mother's senior, "couldn't read or write", and neither parent had completed high school. When Zena was at Intermediate School, her mother fostered a child with a range of disabilities. Zena described family life as "chaotic" and conflict-filled, and her parents finally separated after she left home. Her mother subsequently remarried and had two more children.

None of the young women in my study described particularly happy childhoods apart from Kate, whose family circumstances were certainly more stable and privileged than the others. Emma's family life was the only one that might be regarded as fairly 'normal' or typical of the 'middle New Zealand' family. Three of the young women were the children of teenage mothers; four were brought up in extremely straitened financial circumstances; two had parents with severe addiction problems and lost these parents to suicide; and three described their family life as 'chaotic'. Only one had parents who remained together. Apart from Kate, only Emma had a parent who had completed high school. However, all the young women's parents were in full or part-time paid employment, at the time of this study.

Andy's story

I have chosen to present Andy's story of childhood and family life for several reasons. Whilst unique in its content and narration, it is an articulate rendering of a difficult and deprived childhood. Andy was not alone among my participants in her experience of childhood privation and family conflict. Her story 'stands in' for many others (Squire, 2008, p. 55). It demonstrates how Andy has chosen to frame the formative influence of her family on her identity.

Here is my reconstruction of Andy's story of childhood and family life. I have incorporated the direction of my questions as well as Andy's own words to tell the story she shared, and to reveal the co-constructive nature of the narrative. Andy's actual words are written in italics. I have numbered the excerpts to assist the reader to follow my subsequent analysis of the narrative account.

(1) I started this interview by asking Andy whom she felt closest to in her family.

... through my teenage years it was probably my Dad ... Mum and Dad I think divorced when I was about 2, yep, and Dad, um, went to jail a couple of times while I was growing up, the first time when I was 4 or 5 and then again when I was about 10, and, um (p) so right through we had, um, visitation with Dad, it was usually supervised ...

(2) Tell me about your mum and your relationship with her.

Um (p) I remember having some rip-roaring argument matches with Mum (laughs). She's quite, um, emotionally shut off, you know, she's not the - as a kid she wouldn't come in and tuck us into bed and give us a kiss and say, "I love you, goodnight," kind of thing, and it was just, "Right it's time to go to bed now," and off you'd go, and, um - so she was quite,

you know, almost a bit cold, in a way, but that's just - I could see where that came from, you know, once I got into my teenage years ... but it was still a real struggle, as a kid, and, um, I guess, yeah, when I was really, you know, when I was little, little, my older sisters were quite naughty teenagers as well, so I can remember a lot of Mum's time being focused on what she needed to do for them, and so I can remember just kind of getting - I remember being dragged around where Mum needed to go because, you know, she had some support services working with her for them; um, my closest older sister spent some time in [a girls' home], and um, you know, she had to have counselling for some things so it was off to, you know - Mum didn't drive so it was catching the bus to, you know, sit in this office while Susie had her session with the counsellor, so, you know, I'd be sitting there going, "What the hell are we doing here, this is really boring," so, yeah ...

(3) What are some other stand-out memories of childhood?

I remember (p) struggling with – like Mum had a couple of relationships while I was a child, and my uncle lived with us for a while as well, and I can remember them, you know, trying to support Mum and being the authority of the house and I remember being little and having this list in my bedroom drawer and I think I was about 8 when I wrote it and it was "The Men I Hate", and it had my uncle and it had my step dad ... you know, this list of men that I hated because they, you know, "How dare they try and tell me off!" you know? ... Cos I could remember being soo angry with (p) um, you know? - and none of them were ever horrible people, at all! But yeah, I just, um, yeah, I suppose as close as me and Mum – well, me and Mum weren't very close but I still had that, you know? (p) I think because me and Mum weren't so close, whatever kind of bond we did have seemed so fragile that, then, Mum being in a relationship with a man, was like, "Uh huh, no, I get little enough attention as it is, you know, where am I going to fit in here?" if I already kind of didn't feel like I fitted in? Do you get what I mean?

(4) I asked Andy what sort of emotions she associated with her childhood.

(Sighs) (p) Mmm, I wouldn't say it was the best time in my life, it wasn't, it really wasn't and it wasn't awful all of the time, but the majority of the time I felt, um, sad (p) and I guess I felt confused a lot of the time because there was always stuff going on that I didn't

understand and I didn't, I was quite, um - I never went to preschool or 'Kindy' so I was quite isolated from little children, you know ... so I struggled to make friendships, to make friends as a kid, you know, and on top of that my family was a bit, being a bit chaotic, I was always a bit guarded anyway, and a bit embarrassed about where we lived and the fact that Mum didn't drive and that we couldn't afford a telephone like all the other kids, you know? Dad was in jail, you know? So I always felt a bit, a bit lonely I suppose, yeah (pensive tone).

(5) Andy then shared (with some delight) an anecdote from her childhood.

I remember (laughs) we had a swing at the back of the yard and I'd go there when I was feeling really sad, and I'd sing; I'd play on the swing and I'd sing, and I was probably about 6 or 7 and, um, I'd always sing Bette Midler, you know, "The Wind beneath my Wings", because we always sung it at Primary School and it was a beautiful song. And um, I remember, um, such a silly thing (p) I remember, um, imagining that the neighbours over the back fence, who were quite a wealthy family - and I remember thinking, you know, "The neighbours are going to hear me sing and just think it's amazing!" and I was going to be whisked off to be a famous singer, you know? (p) And I'm the most awful singer (laughs). You know? But I can remember going back again, over and over, and singing at the top of my voice and I suppose it was just a little bit of an outlet for me, I suppose, mmm, and it was nice, it was so peaceful down the back of the yard and there was big trees over the fence and there was a family of fantails which was just so lovely and I spent hours down there ... you know?(p) That makes me smile when I think of that, it was so lovely.

(6) I asked Andy how she would describe herself as a child.

I probably showed my confusion and sadness as anger; I remember always shouting, I was such a shouter and so was Mum, and I can remember full-blown shouting matches and I was - I can imagine the whole neighbourhood would have heard, and you know, at school I was quiet probably, you know, and I didn't try anything, I didn't put myself out there. I had friends but I was never too close to them and I remember, you know - little things happen when you're a kid and I remember things like, you know, "Why didn't I get invited to a

party, I thought I was their friend too and why were other girls invited and not me?" you know?

It was not until much later in the interview that I learned that the reason that Andy's father had been in prison on several occasions, throughout her childhood, was for the sexual abuse of her older sisters. Andy never revealed to me whether she herself had also been sexually abused and I didn't ask her this sensitive question. I felt that it was her right to choose what she did and didn't share with me about her childhood and family life (Stake, 2003).

(7) When I asked Andy about school, and how she saw herself as a student, she said:

To start off with I felt quite clever as a student, you know, and I did quite well at things and I don't remember when that changed and I lost that confidence, I think it might have been moving to Intermediate ...

(8) And secondary school?

It was just a waste of time really ... at Intermediate I could get away without trying, but at Secondary School there were expectations on you to do things and so that's when I kind of got really angry again, I suppose, so I'd always be the one disrupting class, shouting at the teachers, storming out of class, getting sent out of class, yeah... a lot of time bunking.

What is the meaning of Andy's narrative account?

"Narrative analysts ... pay attention to what is unsaid or unsayable by looking at the structure of the narrative discourse and markers of omissions ..." (Josselson, p. 227)

In Andy's narratives of childhood and family life, she presents herself as an emotionally-neglected little girl, struggling to make her presence felt and to have her needs met by a distracted mother in a conflict-filled and "chaotic" family environment. The overwhelming tone of these stories is of sadness, loneliness and anger.

At the heart of Andy's story is an unspeakable but omnipresent family secret to which she repeatedly alludes, but is unwilling to disclose. It was Andy's revelation of this hidden story, much later in our interview, which helped unlock the central themes of her narratives of family and her framing of self and identity.

Andy's father, the family member to whom she felt closest, was twice imprisoned in her childhood for the sexual abuse of his two older daughters. This is a dominant but "unsayable" family story with multiple consequences for Andy and her family: an absent father, an emotionally-distracted and unavailable mother, difficult and demanding much-older sisters, the involvement of social services, the presence of other men in the family home, family poverty and privation, and isolation resulting from social and familial condemnation of the father's abuse, and the mother's inability to protect her children.

The father's imprisonment is mentioned twice: to explain his absence and her parents' divorce (1), and to contextualise Andy's own social guardedness and embarrassment about her family circumstances (4). There are other veiled references to the abuse: the supervised prison visitation (1); Andy's understanding of her mother's coldness "once I got into my teenage years" (2); her sister's need "to have counselling for some things" (2); her confusion as a child "because there was always stuff going on that I didn't understand" (4); and her poignant recounting of her social exclusion by other children: "Why didn't I get invited to a party, I thought I was their friend too" (6).

How does Andy construct her identity in these narratives?

Andrews (2008, p. 67) defines an important component of narrative research as "the analysis of key themes that help organize the way a life story is told ... [T]hese themes cluster around recurrent content in stories" and constitute the multi-vocal self. My analysis of key themes and recurring content in Andy's narratives reveals her endeavours to integrate these "multiple psychic realities" (Josselson, 2011, p. 227) into a coherent narrative identity.

Andy presents her life as "a struggle", a struggle to have her needs met, to gain the attention and love of her mother, and to make friends. In Andy's narrative accounts of childhood, the word "struggle" appears as a verb and a noun on three occasions: (2), (3) and (4). This is a dominant and recurring theme for Andy. In her later stories of adulthood, she described other struggles: to complete her tertiary qualifications, to parent her children well, to overcome her lack of confidence, to control her anger, and to balance the many demands of work and family life. "Struggle" is an active word, suggesting that Andy stories her own identity as agentic rather than passive. Although her life experiences were difficult, she was not a helpless victim.

Andy's struggle is expressed as anger and angry resistance, another recurring persona in her narratives. Andy has "rip-roaring argument matches" with her mother (2), which the neighbours would have heard (6); she expresses her belligerent discontent: "What the hell are we doing here?" when, as a little girl, she accompanies her mother to counselling sessions for her older sister (2); and she lists "The Men I Hate" (3) in furious protest at the men in her mother's life, who threaten her already "fragile" relationship. In Andy's stories, she strongly 'fights her corner', staking her claim to be noticed in the context of her family and, later, at high school where her anger explodes: "shouting at teachers, storming out of class" (8). Andy eventually 'drops out' of school after a violent outburst in which she throws a desk at her teacher. In each of these stories, Andy presents herself as powerfully agentic and resistant, suggesting a resilience which sits less than comfortably with other accounts of her 'multi-vocal' self.

Andy managed the struggles in her life by becoming guarded (4) as well as angry. She was "never too close to [her] friends" (6) and well-defended against disappointment and rejection. She describes her gradual loss of confidence, which was manifested in her quietness at school and her fear of "putting herself out there" and trying new things (7). Lack of confidence is present in all Andy's stories, particularly of schooling experiences; and, later, of new situations such as transition to and from the Teen Parent School.

Another recurring theme in Andy's stories is of "not belonging". Andy presents herself as a 'misfit', a social isolate or outsider in all the contexts of her life: familial, schooling, and peer group. She stated, "... I already kind of didn't feel like I fitted in?" when articulating the inadequacy of her relationship with her mother (3). Her social relationships were constrained by embarrassment at the poverty and social disgrace of her family, represented by their lack of a telephone, their chaotic circumstances, and her father's imprisonment. Because she was deprived of the culturally normative experience of early childhood education (Kindergarten), Andy was isolated from other children and struggled to make friends (4), not only in childhood but also much later at the School for Teenage Parents.

The isolation of 'not belonging' in the many contexts of her life suggests a complex interplay of identities for Andy. On the one hand, by storying herself as a misfit in her family, Andy has been able to reject their constraining identities of impoverishment and "chaos". Andy's 'escape fantasy' (6) is an example of such rejection. Andy delighted in recounting this lyrical memory of

the little girl who did not belong in the context of her family, and who yearned for another more successful life and identity in which her special talents would be recognised. Allen and Osgood (2009) have described the ‘othering’ of one’s own mother as commonplace amongst ‘upwardly mobile’ young women, because this allows them to claim their own more ‘successful’ identities.

On the other hand, whilst knowing that she was “quite clever” at primary school (7), Andy rejected this identity when she was streamed into the academic class at high school, because it separated her from her familiar (and less academic) peer group. She recalls how she responded to being acknowledged as academically able: “Who are these nerds? ... I don’t belong here”.

Andy’s use of narrative structure

Apart from a brief spoken appearance by her mother, Andy is the only character with a speaking part in her narratives. The absence of other speaking roles made Andy’s narratives unique amongst the stories of the young women I interviewed. This narrative device emphasises her extreme emotional and social isolation as a child. It also elicits the empathy of Andy’s listeners, by evoking a strong and animated vocal presence throughout her narratives. A powerfully agentic device, it denies the importance of voices other than her own. Andy allows her mother to speak once, to show us her inability to express her love for her children, when she sends them to bed (2). We also hear her, indirectly, as a “shouter” in arguments with Andy, who shares this ‘angry’ identity. Andy draws on cultural or ‘canonical’ narratives: of the ‘ideal mother’ (3) and of childhood as ‘the best days of your life’ (6), to depict her own ‘less than ideal’ mother, and the unhappiness of her experience of childhood.

I noted that there were no surprises for Andy in the process of telling her stories, unlike other participants, such as Tatiana. For Andy, these were familiar story lines and characters. This suggested that she had reflected on her life experiences on a number of occasions, in an endeavour to make sense of herself and her family.

Narrative possibilities claimed and resisted by Andy

Whilst Andy stories herself as an angrily-resistant misfit, her subsequent accounts of schooling and of teenage life indicate the powerful constraining influence of her familial and ‘classed’ narratives of self. She became a troubled teenager like her sisters, and was constantly in strife at school. Feeling that she didn’t belong, Andy followed her familial pattern by ‘dropping out’ in

her third year without qualifications. Suffering recurring bouts of depression, she spent her time ‘hanging out’ with her boyfriend, drinking and partying, and became pregnant at sixteen, despite one of her sisters saying that she thought Andy would be different. It was not until Andy attended the School for Teenage Parents that she was supported to channel her angry resistance into new identities as a successful learner, and as a young woman with aspirations for a future, unconstrained by her familial narratives of self.

II: Schooling

Six little girls at school

I had many conversations with my participants about their experiences of conventional schooling, some in the context of their stories of childhood, and others in the context of their (very different) experiences of the School for Teenage Parents. Apart from Anahera, who was the only young woman to enjoy all levels of schooling, their stories were remarkably consistent and shared three underlying themes.

The first theme was the inability of conventional school to respond appropriately to their individual learning needs. The second theme was the poor relationships they experienced with teachers, whom they felt were mostly uncaring and uninterested. And the third theme was the hostile and frustrating school context, which reinforced their negative identities as “impossible” (Youdell, 2006) or unsuccessful learners.

All of the six young women, featured in this chapter, said they hated high school and felt anonymous: “You were just a number”. Two were academically very capable, although conventional schooling had failed to recognise and support their potential for academic success; four had significant learning challenges for which they felt they received inadequate support; four were stood down, suspended or asked to leave school because of their active defiance of school rules and structures, and the other two ‘dropped out’; two became pregnant whilst at high school, and four left school without any qualifications. Only one of the six achieved NCEA Level One (the first national qualification) before leaving school.

Despite her learning challenges, Sam had enjoyed primary school, where “the teachers cared ... they helped you and wanted you to succeed”. Describing her high school as “a terrible school”, Sam felt she wasn’t noticed by her teachers, who “didn’t care” and appeared to have no

expectations that she would succeed. Sam became a persistent truant, drinking with friends and “hanging out”, before discovering she was pregnant and dropping out of school from her second year when she was 15.

Tatiana said she was “crap at school” and had “given up” on education. She “hated all [her] teachers ... They were all just on to me or didn’t want anything to do with me”. Disliking school structures such as changing subjects and classroom locations throughout the school day, Tatiana was stubbornly defiant of school rules and was asked to leave from her third year.

Emma also stated she “hated secondary school and was never there”.

I found every excuse in the book not to go to class. I’ve never been very good with reading and writing ... and I’d get into trouble when my work wasn’t done ... after third form it just got worse and I was like, ‘I can’t be bothered anymore, I just won’t do it!’ ... [I was] always getting kicked out of class ... always breaking the rules.

Emma dropped out of school with no qualifications, part way through her third year.

Zena also had difficulties learning to read and write, which made schooling an increasing challenge. Frequent changes of primary school didn’t help and, by the time Zena attended Intermediate School, she had “started getting rebellious and real angry. That’s when I started getting into fights ...when I got quite tough.” She recalled the stress of not being able to keep up with the class work. “[W]hen you’re forced into something that you’re not ready for, that makes it hard and that’s what I found at school ... ‘Oh, you’re not doing it, you’ve got to hurry up to get it done on time!’” At high school, Zena’s peers were involved with petty crime and violence. “[I was] getting into trouble and not going to class and just drinking on school grounds ...” She decided, “School’s not really for me and I can do better with something else”. Stood down in her second year with no qualifications, Zena discovered, two weeks later, that she was pregnant.

Each of the young women conforms to research findings that lack of academic success has mostly made conventional schooling unrewarding for teenage parents (Allen & Osgood, 2009; Patterson, 2011; te Riele, 2007). However, their achievements at the Teen Parent School were to affirm that they do not conform to the findings of New Zealand quantitative research that teenage

mothers are academically less able than their peers (Woodward, Horwood, & Fergusson, 2001, p. 302).

When I listened to their stories of school, it became apparent that the young women were drawing on the narrative of “hating high school”, prevalent in their disaffected youth culture. Filled with disparaging and oppositional tales of ‘us’, the students, and ‘them’, the teachers, these narratives were an expression of the young women’s alienation from, and resistance to, the school system with its power disparities and institutional control, its lack of co-operative learning partnerships between students and their teachers, and its categorisation of them as unacceptable or failed learners (Bishop, 2003; Youdell, 2006). This was reinforced by broader cultural and social discourses which reflect the wide-spread disrespect for, and criticism of, schools and teachers amongst politicians, employers, the media, and other sectors of society.

There was little in their own lives to encourage the young women to view conventional school more positively. The normative narratives about school failure and incompleteness of their parents, older siblings and school friends mostly reflected their own experience of school as a hostile environment in which they felt neither welcome nor valued participants. Their embracing of subversive counter stories, as school truants and drop-outs, ensured their social acceptance and sense of belonging within their own sub-cultural groups.

Conventional schooling had been unable to provide the acceptance, support, sense of belonging and opportunities for success, which could have gone some way to mitigating the effects of familial discord and deprivation, experienced by most of these young women (Bishop, et al., 2009; Macfarlane, et al., 2007). Writing of educational exclusions and inequities, Youdell (2006, p. 2) stated that:

‘who’ a student is – in terms of gender, sexuality, social class, ability, disability, race, ethnicity and religion as well as popular and sub-cultural belongings – is inextricably linked with the ‘sort’ of student and learner that s/he gets to be, and the educational inclusions s/he enjoys and/or the exclusion s/he faces ... some constellations of identity markers ... come to foreclose the possibility of educational ‘success’, that is, the student is produced as an ‘impossible learner’.

The young women in my study were predominantly but not exclusively working class, included both Māori and Pākehā, and were, in several cases, learning ‘disabled’ from the perspective of the conventional school system. All were framed as failing or impossible learners. Whilst actively resisting the constraints of their experiences of schooling, some in open and aggressive defiance and others in quiet and non-compliant resistance, evidenced in their rates of truancy and disengagement from school, the young women nevertheless mostly picked up or internalised this negative framing of their identities. In common with many disaffected early school leavers, including the teenage mothers in Patterson’s (2011) New Zealand study, the young women decided that school was ‘not for them’.

Kate’s story

I have chosen to present Kate’s story of school for several reasons. When I interviewed Kate about childhood experiences, it was her stories of school and of teachers rather than of family life that formed her dominant narratives of identity. Kate constructed her schooling narrative as a causal explanation of who she became in her teenage years: an addicted drug user, a school ‘drop-out’, and a teenage parent. This was of particular significance because, apart from her learning ‘disability’, Kate’s “constellation of identity markers” as feminine, middle-class, and White should have been “synonymous with the ‘ideal learner’ who is set up for educational ‘success’”, according to Youdell (2006, p. 2). In reality, Kate’s experience of school was consistent with that of the other young women who participated in my study.

As with Andy’s story, I have incorporated my questions as well as Kate’s own words to tell the story she shared, and to reveal the co-constructive nature of the narrative.

(1) Tell me a bit about School?

Umm? School was always difficult from the first day. I just remember it was hard to make friends (p) and it was hard to (p) read. I always remember that – and my teacher would say, “Just read it!!!” “I can’t!” (Laughs) Yeah, I think that was quite a big thing, because once that all kind of came out that I couldn’t read, and I couldn’t spell and I couldn’t really write (p). And people were really – it really frustrates – I remember when I was a kid – I don’t mean now, I know it wasn’t like that – but as a kid, all I remember is that everyone was angry at me and I can’t do it! (Laughs) And that’s all I remember, people

were just, "Do it!" and I was like, "But I am!!" But I'm not? Yeah. Umm, Mum and Dad got, um - cos the school wouldn't do anything about it? And I remember going to SPELD, and that all got [boring] – just the testing? ... And that continued right on, right through Primary School and High School as well ... I had tutoring from when I was 5 to about 7 years old and then I was kind of able to, umm, get through. I mean I always remember being at school and knowing that I knew a lot (p) but not being able to prove it, which was always hard cos people wouldn't (p) believe you? Which was strange and, yeah, once you get told you can't do something over and over, then you just don't do it in the end.

(2) What effect did that have on you?

... once I hit Third Form, I was just over school. I was waiting til I turned 16 (laughs) and then I could leave.

(3) How did that feel for you?

It (clears throat), it was - I just remember feeling frustrated. Because they, like they had learning support, or whatever, but I was never allowed to be part of it, cos they'd always be like, "Well, you're good enough to be in the normal class." And I was like, "But I'm not. I'm not!" Like, cos whenever they'd test and stuff, it would always come out that I was quite smart but I was like, "I can't actually get it out?" And then when I was in the class, the teacher would be like, "Well, why aren't you actually trying?" And then, I think, yeah, well by about Third Form I was like, "Well, if you want to see me not try, well then I'll show you, cos I am trying and then I'm not going to try now cos that's what you think!" So ... And then I started probably getting into trouble.

(4) Did you have friends at that stage at school?

Mmm ... I was always worried that my friends would go away, or they wouldn't like me. And I don't think that ever left ...

(5) So it sounds like school wasn't a great experience for you.

Mmm. Not at all ... I probably would have been good at Science but I didn't really care too much at that stage and (p) and um ... If they'd just let me write my notes like I wanted to

then that would have been fine. But they'd throw them out. And I'd get angry cos they'd taken me like the whole day ... At the time I was just like, "Man, everyone hates me!" And then, I think, by the time I got to High School, I was probably already anxious about that, and then once you add in the peers and all of those other, like hormones and stuff, my anxiety just probably went through the roof. Mmm.

(6) So would you describe yourself as a fairly anxious adolescent?

Yeah, I was always worried about what people thought of me, and, um, whether I was pleasing people? I think that also came from the fact that I just couldn't do a lot of things, and it felt like I wasn't pleasing people and so in different areas, I was trying to over-please. I really just wanted people to be happy and that's not so good when you start getting into the "wrong crowd". (Laughs) But yeah, I think that was probably from about 13 when you find drinking and drugs. And I was really good at that, drinking and drugs ...

Kate went on to recount her increasing involvement with drugs and alcohol, whilst at high school, which eventually led to her selling drugs in order to finance her habit. Pregnancy temporarily halted her drug and alcohol use but Kate was unable to overcome her addiction until her second year at the Teen Parent School, when she was eighteen.

(7) So when you look back on that now, how do you feel?

... as I get older, cos I always thought everything was my fault and I did it and that was true, but there was also a lot of people then that let me down, as well. I wish I'd kind of said something and maybe stood up for myself a bit more than what I did.

(8) So the people that let you down?

I guess the school. And, (p) I wouldn't say my parents but (p) yeah, just the school and that's about it really.

How does Kate construct her identity in this narrative account?

Kate presents herself as a frustrated, anxious and, later, angry young girl, who struggled to fit into a conventional school environment which was unable to understand and accommodate her learning needs or to acknowledge her efforts to succeed. Her 'true' identity as a "smart" student

(3), who had dyslexia, was not recognised or valued in this environment. Kate's school experience confirmed for her that nothing she did was ever good enough. Her failure to please others was internalised as "everyone hates me" (5). Kate expressed her resistance to this negative identity by 'giving up', 'turning off' school and "getting into trouble" (3). Adopting a successful counter identity as a heavy drinker and drug user (6), she won the yearned-for approval and admiration of her peers because she could drink so much "for a little girl". She herself admits to being a high achiever in this 'other' world, mastering its culture of exploitation and deceit, and becoming a dealer, whilst still at high school, to finance her increasing dependence on drugs. Kate's final rejection of her schooling identity was manifested in her 'dropping out' at the completion of her third year, having achieved NCEA Level One, with the intensive tutoring support of her parents.

Kate's use of narrative structure

Throughout her narrative account, Kate re-enacted powerful school memories in interactive dialogue, so that her stories are peopled with the disapproving voices of teachers and, later, her peers. This indicates the importance of these critical voices in the formation of Kate's sense of self and identity. The overwhelming 'narrative of self' within the discursive context of her school experiences was that she was, in effect, a failure who could never please others, regardless of her efforts. Kate's supportive family warrants only one appearance in these narratives, suggesting that their positive influence on her sense of self was outweighed by the negative influence of school and teachers.

Kate has constructed a consistent 'cause and effect' story of school failure to explain why she "started getting into trouble" (3). Unlike her story of schooling, her subsequent account of her increasing involvement with drugs and alcohol (not included here) was told with considerable fluency and energy. Kate was "really good at drinking and drugs" (6) and I noted the wry humour in her observation of her own recognised ability in this arena. This part of Kate's narrative is, in fact, a form of counter 'success' story in which she depicts herself, with some pride, as "smart" in her ability to use other people and to operate successfully within the social dynamics of the drug and alcohol world. In her own words, Kate was finally "on top", an unfamiliar but yearned for experience in the context of her schooling and social life.

I was struck by Kate's confidence in narrating this aspect of her story. Apart from her brief acknowledgement of my presence, in the comment: "it sounds strange but [my extended family] are good at [drugs and alcohol]", Kate did not censor her story or check my reactions, as Andy had in her narratives. This created the impression that this was a story Kate had recounted to adult listeners on a number of occasions, including in counselling sessions before and during her enrolment at the Teen Parent School. This was reflected in her linear construction and coherent presentation of self and identity, which distinguished her narratives from the less-visited stories of participants such as Tatiana. When I asked Kate how she saw herself with "all that now", she was able to dissociate herself from 'that Kate' and to state, with some acceptance, that "sometimes people just need to go down that road". Kate was clear that whilst, as a child and teenager, she had internalised the story that "everything was [her] own fault", she now realised that a lot of people – specifically school and teachers – "had let [her] down" (7). She regretted not having the courage to have "stood up for [herself] a bit more" (7).

Kate's 'agentic' self

Kate's angry resistance to the negative identities of school was expressed in acts of self harm through the sustained abuse of drugs and alcohol. Although less confrontational than Andy's angry resistance, which also involved heavy binge drinking, both Kate and Andy suffered bouts of anxiety and depression for which they received counselling support and medication. It was only as a result of Kate's 'turning point' experience of pregnancy that she decided to make healthier life style choices. As she explained: "I started selling drugs. And then I got pregnant. So then it was all over".

In Collins (2010, p. 12) study of resilience in young women, she found that, "Resilience may come from contradicting social norms and finding ways to define and empower [oneself] through being very good at things that are not socially accepted". Kate's narratives of drugs and alcohol are an example of this. Her resilience was later to enable Kate to reclaim more positive identities normalised by her own familial culture, within the supportive context of the Teen Parent School.

III: Drugs and alcohol

Six girls 'at play'

Alcohol and drugs played a significant part in the lives of all the young women and featured, frequently, in their stories. Their accounts of alcohol and drug use, which mostly started in their

early teens and, in two cases, in their pre-teens, are stories of abuse and addiction. Tatiana and Sam spoke about their own parents' substance abuse, which contributed to their eventual suicides. Kate and Emma were both heavily involved in the drug scene in their teens, and Kate sold drugs to finance her habit, whilst at high school. Kate finally "kicked her habit" when she attended the Teen Parent School, because she realised it was compromising her ability to parent well. Three of the young women acknowledged their own alcohol abuse and addiction, and two of them received addiction counselling whilst at the Teen Parent School. Emma, Zena and Tatiana all stated they use alcohol sparingly 'today', and Sam described herself as a "once-a-week" drinker. Kate and Andy acknowledged still drinking heavily on social occasions and Andy justified this in her comment that "it's just so ingrained in us to drink".

Three of the young women also experienced significant episodes of depression as teenagers, a mental health condition with strong links to unresolved anger, and to the abuse of alcohol and drugs. As one of the young women recounted:

I'd gone through a bit of depression with study and [parenting] and part time work and that. It was no matter what you do, I just felt angry ... I remember that when I first found out that I had depression, it was at [the Teen Parent School] ... It didn't help that I was drinking at night. I could drink up to 2 bottles a night. I was 16 then.

I was interested to note that, despite her early experience of alcohol abuse and the loss of her mother through addiction, Tatiana was not amongst the young women who suffered from depression.

Andy recounted an all-too-familiar story of early teenage binge drinking in the broader cultural context of New Zealand, which she described as widespread and not just reserved to young people "with issues ... something going on for them ... or lack of family support".

It was weird because ... like it was so many people at High School that you'd never think it of ... it was such a wide group of teenagers that would do it. We'd go to parties and there'd be 150 kids from the one school. I don't know how we used to get away with it, I really don't! (Laughs) When I first started drinking a lot, we used to all gather at the local primary school, and there'd be 50 or 100 of us and we'd set bins on fire and I could imagine the amount of glass and vomit, and [a security firm] would come and they'd put

their big search lights on and they'd be driving across the back field and we'd all be like escaped prisoners running away from the big search lights, there'd just be teenagers bolting everywhere.

Sam's story of drinking was somewhat different from the other young women. For her, drinking was fun:

The drinking wasn't bad! It was good, it was like fun! I loved going out with my friends and drinking at a mate's house and driving with our friends ... I didn't have a curfew ... I think [Mum] had had enough by then ... I was drinking quite a bit, doing a bit of drugs, going to quite a few parties and things.

Emma's story of drugs and alcohol was played out within the broader context of 'gang' involvement and the role of the 'gang' in the abuse and selling of drugs. Whilst an extreme example, Emma's story of gang involvement was not unfamiliar to many of the young women.

I was just in a, um, I was in a real, quite an abusive relationship, and I was sort of, I never did a lot of drugs myself, well I did but I sort of, I never did 'P' [methamphetamines]. I did a lot of other things, my main rule at the time was really no needles – but even though I was tying up other people's arms (p) to do things and I sort of spent half my time down at the, um [gang] pad ... Umm, a lot of the time I was honestly too drunk and too excited, umm, it was quite exciting, (p) umm, there were a few things that I saw in that world that you would, oh, it's horrible, you'd never, you'd just go and do something else ... some things now I think, I just can't believe that I ever did that?! Yeah, now I've got a huge perspective on it now! Having [my son], sort of, knowing – you know, people would come in and buy drugs, and you'd know them, there were teachers and sort of things like that – teachers, doctors, all sorts of people. Yeah.

Tatiana's story

I have chosen Tatiana's narrative of the destructive role of drugs and alcohol on her family life, for several reasons. It is a powerful and compelling story which is told in a very different narrative voice from that of Andy or Kate. This account reveals the complexity of our individual responses to profound and life-changing experiences, and the influence of these experiences on the framing of our identities. As with the other stories in this chapter, it does not fit neatly into

one category, and could have appeared, just as appropriately, in the section on childhood and family life.

Tatiana's stories of childhood and family life extended over several interviews and were lengthy and somewhat unstructured, with many digressions. Salmon's observation (Salmon & Riessman, 2008) that "Narrative shaping entails imposing a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected" (p. 78) seemed to reflect Tatiana's narrative experience.

I have chosen to reconstruct Tatiana's narratives as a series of questions and edited responses, not always in the order they were told. Tatiana's speech was marked by contemporary colloquial patterns such as the use of 'like' and the 'working class' constructions: 'we done' and 'yous', which I have included in this reconstruction.

(1) Do you want to tell me a bit about your Mum?

Urgh - What do you want to know?

(2) Well, you've talked to me a bit about your Mum before and I get the sense that your childhood was a really difficult one at times.

Tatiana responded by describing her childhood as reasonably happy until she was 10 or 11. Prompted by my question about her mother having an alcohol problem, she acknowledged that this was a contributing factor to the escalating parental conflict which affected the whole family. Tatiana recounted a particularly distressing incident in which she had found her mother unconscious in the toilet, covered in faeces and vomit.

(3) Tatiana recalled parental arguments at birthdays over the cost of presents, and the children's strategies to cope with conflict.

Like my sister's birthday, we made up a song (sings), "We're going home on Friday and my birthday is the next day and our parents are fighting, we'll give them a hiding, and nothing goes wrong that day", and then we sung that like twenty minutes straight, real loud, screaming it and they stopped fighting ... And then my birthday, I just remember Dad ripping Mum's bra strap, cos he tried to - I don't know exactly what happened but she was screaming, "You fucking mongrel, you ripped my fucking bra, you f...g mongrel!" And

then the cops arrived and Dad got taken away and I was like, "How could you take my Dad away on my birthday?" "And how could you fight and get to that point?" And it was not long after that that they split.

- (4) Tatiana's father moved to another town with the youngest child when Tatiana was 11 or 12. She and her older sister chose to remain with their mother.

Then she went haywire, and that – then, at the time, I thought that was awesome and parts of that now I still enjoy to an extent because at least I can say I experienced that with her? But not? Because I was so young? ... And some of the nights I spent with Mum, I'll remember them forever, but ... more that I got to experience more adult life with her, as much as I wasn't an adult? But, so I frown upon the fact that she let me do those things but at least I experienced more mature things, not just, "No honey, it's time for bed." Or "let's read a story" or stuff like that cos I was past that ... when I opened up to her and said, "Well I'm doing these things already" she just let me do them with her which was probably not the best thing but at least I did it with her?

- (5) Mmm ... so you're talking about drinking?

Well, not drugs cos I was smoking weed and she wouldn't let me do that. Cigarettes she did, and alcohol but not weed. And one time they got trashed and I drove, which was really bad, really bad!!! But they, Mum and whoever she was with, I can't even remember –two of them were my friends, (laughs) ... got trashed ... I could drive, because country hicks learned to drive early, and they were just that trashed that, in the end, I just had to drag them into the car and drive them home or we were stranded, which wasn't so good. But yeah, (laughs) that one, that was scary actually, (laughs) as much as it wasn't? It was scary that they were that off their face, like they were running into the lake ... and I was just like, "Oh my gosh!" and I honestly, like she offered them, well they offered them to us as well and luckily I said "No?" ... I wasn't going to have any of what does that to me (laughs) no matter how young and stupid I am right now (laughs). I was like "No thankyou!"

- (6) Around this time, Tatiana's mother began a sexual relationship with her fourteen year old daughter's boyfriend. Because of escalating chaos and conflict at home, Tatiana went to live with

a school friend. She recalled some social agency involvement at this time, but was vague about the details. Her mother began to spend increasing periods “at the river”, which she called “her safe place”, and, after a traumatic break-up with her boyfriend, hanged herself there. Tatiana was just thirteen, and her mother was twenty nine or thirty years old.

(7) Do you think that because you experienced all of those things, it made you grow up kind of earlier than a lot of kids?

Sadly, but it also did me a lot of good? The way I handled it. My sister on the other hand experienced the same things and couldn't quite handle it like I could, cos she still hasn't got out of it ... Like I worry about her to an extent, where I'm not worried about – I know that I'm going to be fine? And same with my little brother. But I've always tried to mother him to an extent because she wasn't around. And Dad was mental? Well not, but he lost the plot, he - when she did what she did he just, he couldn't, yeah, he - I'm surprised he didn't try and jump off a bridge to be honest, he got that down. And he just lost it.

(8) Tatiana explained her efforts to keep the family and household functioning and her resentment that these were not acknowledged by her family.

That's my only issue, like with the whole, “Did you have to grow up?” It's, “Yes, I did” but no-one ever looks at me on it? Like, “You didn't have to, your sister did?” She never did and that's what bugs me because on the outside looking in, she was the oldest, she must be doing it all? But on the inside, I did it all and she did nothing? She'd just sleep all day pretty much and then get up and go to school and I would clean all day and then go to school, I'd clean all morning, go to school, come home and clean – one of us would cook tea and then in the weekends I'd clean all day, like toilets, everything, cos as you can see I'm a clean freak. (Laughs) ... I did all that sort of stuff but yet she still gets the credit? ... And [my brother] is the only person out of everyone who says, “You, you were the one that did it. You were the one I remember reading me the stories, you were the one I remember making me my lunch, you were the one who was always at the gate when I finished school”, you know? “You were the one I remember” and he was the kid? So that's my thing. And that's probably why I've got such a thing for him because he was, it was like he was my own kid.

(9) Tatiana explained her mother's actions in the following way.

It wasn't until she obviously fell out of love with him that she started drinking again, you know, and because I believe her first pregnancy was when she was fourteen. She was never a kid, she was never a kid! And so she went back to it, and she did, like she was almost like a fifteen year old when we were that age, and we were her friend? So were our friends her friends. So when I look back, I think she just lost the plot and she just went back into teenage-hood, she finally got them and we were old enough by then, even though we weren't, we were, and obviously we were because we did it? And she knew that, obviously, but we, I knew that, I knew I was sweet. Like Dad says, "If I knew what, if I knew she'd done that, you poor kids" but we were OK.

(10) *I wish I was older cos I feel like I would have been able to do more for her ... But I remember she used to go to the river every day – she'd go to work, she'd go to the river. She'd come home, she'd get drunk. She'd never go into town, that's why there was no groceries cos every time she went in there she got abused. Like my aunty and uncle, we went into town ... and she ended up in a massive fight with my aunty and uncle and she ended up with black eyes and everything over it, like they, like my cousin held her like that and my aunty just laid into her while my uncle dragged me away, and it was like, "How could you do that to my mum right in front of me?" ... But yes, she used to sit at the river every single day ... we'd go and sit with her cos we knew if we couldn't find her, that's where she'd be ... she'd just sit there for hours. Cos she was dying!*

(11) I asked Tatiana: And did she drown herself, when she died?

Nah, she hung herself there. But she was trashed.

(12) I asked Tatiana how she had responded to her Mum's death.

I buried it really because everyone else was falling apart around me so I tried to just be strong and make sure everyone else was OK.

(13) So ... how are you feeling? I mean all that's pretty intense, the stuff you've been talking about.

I'm glad we've talked about it actually cos it opened a few things that I haven't really ... like my sister for example, which I'll go apologise to her tomorrow now cos I feel so bad! (Smokes) And I understand why she fought with us now cos I just thought, "Why are you being such ... yeah!!" ... I try to talk about it as much as I can so ... I'm pretty OK and ... because ... I had to hold it in back then for everyone else... I try and talk about it so I don't ... hold it in and then (explosive sound). And cos I try to think positively and the things that were positive out of those ... like the river how we were talking about ... but I've been trying to remember so I can tell my brother things that he never got to know? ... he was five? So he doesn't know her at all. He's always asking me things and all he ever hears from anyone is bad things and I can't think of good things to help him but I've been trying to and I've got a wee book that every time I remember something, I'm going to start writing what I remember so I can tell him, so I can remember too?

(14) Tatiana shared with me her fear that she would end up like her mother.

Yes! And I've said to Mike [her partner], "If I lose the plot, you be there for my daughter. Please! Cos if I'm not, I need to know you are!" He says, "You won't honey – look at you, you won't." "That's probably what she said too, hon, when we were three." But, but I've always been controllable of my alcohol? Cos I don't like not feeling in control cos I'm, like a controlling person. (Laughs) ... Well, I know I'm OK, like for me, I know I'm not going to let myself get to that point, I know I'll never do the things she did with us, with [my daughter]. EVER! ... cos "Oh my God, pssh, woman!"

(15) So when you look back on your childhood and you look at yourself now, how do you feel about where you are now?

I think everything I've experienced has helped me to be where I am now. It really contributed to me growing up. (Whispers and laughs) - I had mental parents ... I didn't but I did!

The dialogic nature of Tatiana's narratives

As Riessman (2008b, p. 31) said, "[A] 'personal' narrative is social at many levels. At a local level, it is composed jointly, crafted in a collaborative, conversational interaction".

My request that Tatiana tell me about her mother, because of my prior knowledge of this story, guided her subsequent narratives of childhood and family life. My initial question about “family stuff” had elicited stories about Tatiana’s younger brother, and not her mother. It was I who determined that this was an important story to tell. Note her blunt response (1) which was characteristic of Tatiana, who was well-defended about her personal life and quite capable of standing her ground.

Tatiana’s story must be considered, therefore, within the ‘local context’ of our interviews. What followed was an intimate and revealing account, with explicit and distressing content about Tatiana’s late childhood experiences of parental conflict and separation, and of the addiction, disintegration and suicide of her mother. I was overwhelmed by Tatiana’s ‘voice’ in this account, and by her strength of character and positive perspective. This is also a story about how Tatiana responded to these experiences; and how she defines her own identity as a young woman and a mother in resistance to these familial narratives.

Tatiana’s resistance to familial narratives of self

“[T]he self is construed as always in relationship to some other, whether that be another person, other parts of the self, or the individual’s society or culture” (Josselson, 2001, p. 227).

The most powerful of Tatiana’s familial narratives was that of loss of self-control in response to suffering, as manifested by her mother, her father, and her older sister. Tatiana stories herself as the strong and stable presence in the chaos and disintegration of her family. It was she who, as a pre-teen, refused the offer of ‘magic mushrooms’ and took control by driving her “trashed” mother and friends to safety (5); who managed the household after her mother’s death when everyone around her ‘fell apart’, and assumed the role of “mother” to her much-younger brother (8), burying her own grief through self-control (7), (12) and (13).

Tatiana’s narratives are characterised by a number of ‘I’ statements or identity claims made in resistance to her mother’s identity as a negligent and irresponsible parent, whose inability to control her own addictions resulted in her suicide. Where her mother “went haywire” (4) and “lost the plot” (9), Tatiana was responsible and in control: “I’m like a controlling person” (14). She worked hard at domestic chores to recreate order in the chaos of her family, describing herself as “a clean freak” (8). Where her mother had allowed her to drink and smoke from the

age of eleven, Tatiana asserts, “I’ll never do the things she did with us, with my daughter! Ever!” (14) In a form of identity-reversal, characteristic of the experience of many children of alcoholic parents, Tatiana had become ‘the parent’ and her mother, ‘the teenager’. The disintegration and death of her mother had effectively deprived Tatiana of the normative life trajectory of gradual identity separation from her parent.

Nevertheless, Tatiana is intensely loyal to the memory of her mother, and is grateful to have been able to share “adult” experiences with her (4). Her sense of responsibility is manifested in her wish that she could have supported her mother more (10). Tatiana justifies her mother’s behaviour as resulting from her loss of teenage-hood through her very early pregnancy, at the age of fourteen (9). As a young parent herself, Tatiana draws a clear distinction between her mother’s early parenthood and her own, at the more mature age of nineteen. She is also definitive about her own identity as a responsible parent, unlike her mother (14). Yet, despite her assertion that “I knew I was sweet”, “I’m going to be fine” (7), Tatiana gives voice to her inner fear that she will become like her mother “because it’s in my genes”. She implores her partner, “If I lose the plot, you be there for my daughter. Please!” (14). This ambivalence about her own identity is revealed in Tatiana’s anger at her Nana’s and her father’s failure to acknowledge the ‘heroic’ role she felt she had played as “substitute mother”, when her mother died. Her special bond with her brother is sustained by his acknowledgement of the efforts she had made to parent him.

Regardless of her harrowing tale of loss, Tatiana was uniquely and consistently positive in her framing of life’s experiences. She believed that “everything I’ve experienced has helped me to be where I am now” (15). This optimistic construct, which is framed by the cultural narrative that we should “make the most of the hand that life has dealt us”, is strongly agentic and appears to have protected Tatiana from the bouts of depression experienced by several of the other young women whom I interviewed. Her agentic self is also vocalised in her repeated and indignant challenge: “How could you?” when her father was taken away by Police on her birthday, or her mother was beaten up in front of her. The resilient traits of character, in the form of stubbornness, strong will, fixed determination and need to be in control, which made Tatiana challenging to work with in the Teen Parent School environment, were also the traits which ensured her own survival in the midst of family tragedy and despair.

The broader social context of Tatiana's story

Although this story recounts extreme events and experiences, it has components such as heavy drinking and drug abuse, which are common in the context of New Zealand society. The domestic violence and harsh physical retribution of disapproving family, which may disturb those readers from different social and cultural contexts, are also familiar to many New Zealand families and have found expression in films such as 'Once were Warriors', as well as in media representations of family breakdown and dysfunction. Aspects of this story, such as very early youth binge drinking, are also commonplace in New Zealand's culture of alcohol use, and appear in different guises in the stories of most of my research participants. What is unique to Tatiana's story is her mother's active condoning of this practice.

Tatiana's reference to herself as a 'country hick' is another cultural identity familiar to a New Zealand audience. As she said, it is common for 'country hicks' to drive when they are underage, and Tatiana is socially contextualising this behaviour as normative. Her mother's pregnancy at fourteen to a fifteen year old father, whilst at the very young end of the spectrum of teenage pregnancy, is not unfamiliar within the New Zealand context where rates of teenage pregnancy are high, particularly among Māori young people. It is interesting to note that Tatiana herself identifies this as 'a problem' to which she attributes much of her mother's subsequent behaviour. Tatiana does not view her own late teenage pregnancy in this light, and makes a valid distinction about the age range of teenage parenthood often lost in research statistics, and in public discourse (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006).

Having drawn on the young women's stories of child- and teenage-hood, and of schooling to explore the often constraining influences of these cultural contexts on the fashioning of their lives and identities, I will now explore the young women's stories of the contexts of their pregnancies, the 'turning point' in their lives which influenced their decisions to return to school to 'gain qualifications', in order to make a better future for their children.

Part Two:

***“It just changed my life completely”*: Pregnancy and parenthood as a turning point in the fashioning of identities**

In this section, I present selections from the young women’s narratives about the personal contexts of their pregnancies, including their relationships with the fathers of their children, their families’ reactions, and their hopes and aspirations at the time. I also consider the influence on the young women of negative social discourses about teenage pregnancy. And finally, I explore how the life-changing experiences of pregnancy and parenthood acted as turning points in the young women’s lives, offering them new narratives of self as ‘good’ mothers with future hopes and plans. According to SmithBattle (2006, p. 131), many young women “reorganize their lives and priorities around the identities ... of mothering”. One outcome of this reorganisation of lives and priorities was the young women’s recognition of the prevailing discourse about the importance of school qualifications, which would help them to provide a better life for their children. It was mostly for this reason that they decided to enrol in the School for Teenage Parents.

I have chosen to use a more conventional thematic presentation of narrative excerpts in this section, for two reasons. Firstly, the focus of this section is on the theme of pregnancy and parenthood as a turning-point in the lives and identities of my young women participants, and the thematic structure reflects that focus. Secondly, this section serves as a link between the previous section, whose narrative focus was on the framing of identities of three young women, and the next chapter, whose focus is on the role of the School for Teenage Parents in supporting the positive refashioning of its students’ identities. I felt it was timely to reacquaint the reader with all the young women whose stories are featured in the next chapter. I therefore re-introduce Jade, Huia, Rachel and Anahera towards the end of this section.

The young women in my study ranged in age from fourteen to nineteen years when they became pregnant. The three youngest women: Jade and Zena, who were fourteen and Sam, who was fifteen, were still at school (in their second year); Anahera, who was seventeen, was completing her final year of high school. All the other young women had already left, been asked to leave, or ‘dropped-out’ of school. Andy, who was sixteen, was unemployed; Kate, also sixteen, was working at a supermarket; Huia, at seventeen, was newly-enrolled in a tertiary course; Rachel, at

eighteen, was working as an apprentice; Emma, also eighteen, was working part time in retail; and Tatiana, the oldest at nineteen, was working in the hospitality industry.

I: Familial, personal and social responses to the young women's pregnancies

The 'shocking' news

The young women's responses, and those of their parents on learning of their daughters' pregnancies, tell us much about contemporary society's dominant discursive constructions of 'acceptable motherhood' (Allen & Osgood, 2009; Bullen, et al., 2000; Lesko, 2001; Wilson & Huntington, 2006). Teenage motherhood falls outside these boundaries and the 'shocked' reactions of family members, wider society, and the young women themselves, reflect this attitude.

Even Sam, who was unable to remember her reaction, said:

I was shocked – I'm sure I'd be shocked, I've just forgotten or blocked it out (laughs).

The degree of shock and disappointment was tempered by the age of the young woman concerned. There was markedly higher acceptance of pregnancy amongst the older teenage mothers in my study, such as Tatiana and Emma. Tatiana recalled her reaction as:

Shock [and then] it was excitement, I wasn't sad or anything, it was good.

For some of the young women, teenage pregnancy was normalised within their families and this was also reflected in familial and personal reactions, particularly for Zena and Andy. Zena recalls that whilst she was "shocked [and] really upset" because she had been in "a bad situation since Intermediate School", her own role as the older, responsible sister, and her mother's identity as a teenage parent, framed her impending motherhood as "normal".

Because I was ... not, like, a mother figure at home growing up but I already felt like I had that role in me. I know that Mum said she was a young mother herself, it was something that was, like, just normal ...

The pressure to abort

The 'unacceptability' of teenage parenthood was reflected in the pressure placed on five of the young women to have their pregnancies terminated by abortion.

Sam's mother was very clear that this was the best option for her daughter. However, because of Sam's uncertainty about the abortion, the clinic decided against proceeding. Sam described her mother's reaction to her pregnancy, at fifteen, in the following narrative:

She was really pissed off, really angry, very very angry! She wanted an abortion ... I always remember Mum saying, "What are people going to say about me?" And I'd say, "It's not about you! You're not the one with a kid in you!! It's not about you, you didn't do it, I did!!" Mum eventually came round to the idea. She said, "We'll still love it and it will be fine. Everything will be fine!"

Zena was torn between the acceptance of her pregnancy by her own mother, and the pressure of her partner's family to have an abortion.

Mum said, "If it happens then it's meant to happen". [But for Simon's family] abortion was the option and Mum didn't see it like that, so I was torn between two families, and me and Simon had a big fight and we actually broke up, so it was kinda hard.

Zena received counselling at the abortion clinic and, on the day she was booked to have her abortion, was confronted by protesters waving placards and shouting, "Don't do it!" She states she "freaked out" and said to Simon:

'No, I'm not doing it'. [He was] really upset because he wanted me to get it done. We were both so young and both of us didn't know what we wanted.

Reactions of the babies' fathers to the news

As Zena's excerpt reveals, the fathers of the babies were also shocked and upset and, in some cases, angry and reluctant to accept their status as father of the child. Kate's partner reacted with contempt at her sexual 'immorality', despite the fact that he was involved in a sexual relationship with her at the time.

When the doctor told me I was pregnant, Nathan said, "You're such a whore!" He walked out and I just walked home.

Four of the young women were involved in abusive relationships when they became pregnant. Each of these young women was also abusing drugs and/or alcohol, and two were suffering from recurring bouts of depression.

Andy described her partner's reaction to her pregnancy:

I told him I was pregnant and he got really angry actually, to the point where I was quite scared of him. So I kind of left it, cos ... yeah, I was scared of him. I remember one day him telling me on the telephone that if he ever saw me walking down the road, he'd quite happily run me over ...

Kate described her controlling relationship in which her partner continually 'put her down', isolating her from friends and family, and repeatedly frightening her with threats of violence and suicide:

We had this really intense relationship. It was difficult cos every other relationship was like, "I know what you want and you know what I want". But Nathan was so intense – "I love you and if you ever leave me, I'll kill myself. I don't like your friends, your parents," this, that. Now I think it's quite funny. "But why does he keep going out with me when he obviously hates me?" He'd say things like, "You look terrible and you're useless." He was always trying to drive into things when we were in the car ... I can remember being really confused and always worried that I was going to do or say something wrong. I was wrong! That was what I settled with and there was nothing I could do to make him happy. I really wanted to cos ... when they take away all your friends and turn you against your own family and you're left going, "Crap, then I won't have anyone". That's quite scary. My Aunty was also in an abusive relationship ... and she advised me to leave Nathan. He left me! Then I knew, "Right, I'm out". That was it. "I don't want you back – you broke up with me!" ... I was 14 weeks [pregnant] when we broke up.

Kate draws on the dominant cultural narrative of 'the happy family' (Patterson, et al., 2010) to describe her own isolation and sense of loss when her relationship with her child's father ended.

I was pregnant with his child ... everyone was so happy when I broke up with him and that was hard as well. Realising I had to do it all by myself. No home with a white picket fence, a Mum and Dad and a dog and whatever else happy families had.

The two partners, Mike and Simon, who still live with the young women and their children today, responded quite differently to their impending fatherhood. These young men accepted their responsibilities as fathers and made what they regarded as necessary adjustments in their lives, to accommodate these responsibilities. Tatiana recalled:

Mike wanted to protect me and then he went and got an apprenticeship ... he didn't want to be [working out of town] during the pregnancy.

Social responses to teenage pregnancy

Breheny and Stephens (2007b) have written extensively about the explicit and implicit negative judgements about teenage parenthood made by many New Zealand health professionals. Andy's experience of her doctor's assumption that she would have an abortion, because of her age, is one example.

And the first thing the doctor said to me was, "So when are you available?" And I said, "Sorry?" She said, "When are you available and we can make an appointment now for you at the abortion clinic." And I went, "Hold up lady! You've just told me I'm pregnant!"

It is unlikely that older first time mothers would receive such a response from medical professionals.

Jade recalled her own experience of prejudice in the maternity hospital, following the birth of her child.

When I had [my child] in the hospital, I got that a wee bit from the nursing staff, y'know? Undertones like, 'I'll tolerate you but I don't really like you or your lifestyle' ... You'd be surprised what people say.

The young women's narratives reinforced the disjunction between social responses to 'acceptable' motherhood and their own experiences as 'unacceptable' or 'deviant' mothers (Wilson & Huntington, 2006). 'Acceptable' motherhood is greeted with joy by family and

members of the wider community, including complete strangers. ‘Acceptably’ pregnant women become a form of public property and are subjected to the admiring gazes and solicitous inquiries of others. The mother-to-be is treated with care and concern and her status is celebrated. In contemporary New Zealand, ‘acceptably’ pregnant women are no longer hidden from view but take their place in the public gaze as television presenters and celebrities. Celebrity pregnancies amongst older women continue to be the subject of heightened media coverage and public interest (Allen & Osgood, 2009; Wilson & Huntington, 2006).

This positive reaction contrasts markedly with the shame and embarrassment experienced by many pregnant teenage women, who are subjected to the disapproving gazes and unwelcome negative comments of complete strangers in supermarkets and other public spaces.

Kate recalled her own experience of the disapproval of others, as a young teenage mother:

It felt like people were looking at me, waiting for me to do something wrong so they could come and tell me off!

The negativity of social attitudes served to reinforce her already-low self-regard:

When I was pregnant, I didn't like myself. I was pretty sure I was worthless and that I didn't have much to offer the world ...

One of the participants acknowledged the negative influence of the dominant social attitude to teenage parenthood on her own unconscious reaction to seeing other teenage mothers in public spaces, such as shopping malls.

One of the more poignant narratives, from a focus group interview with three of my young women participants, was about their longing to have ‘baby showers’, a dominant cultural ritual celebrating impending motherhood. This ritual was denied them because their teenage pregnancies were not viewed as events worthy of celebration.

A more positive effect of the wide-spread disapproval of teenage parenthood was expressed in the young women’s acts of resistance, notably in their determination to prove people wrong in their stereotypical judgements. Andy talked about ‘flipping the bird’ at ‘society’, in the same

focus group interview, and stated that this was, in part, her motivation for attending the School for Teenage Parents.

Yeah, and I remember when Gabe was really little and hating that stereotype and hating that feeling and then knowing that if I did something that would make me 'better' in society's eyes, then that would be like me 'flipping the bird' and going, "Screw you, I've done that!"

In the same interview, Emma also spoke of her resistance to negative social judgements.

I just wanted to break the stereotype sort of thing. I didn't want to be like that, because just after - it was 5 days after I'd had Eli - I was out shopping, the day we'd come home from the hospital, and we were in the baby part of Farmers [a department store] and this woman was looking at my baby and she said, "Oh, who's his Mum?" and I said, "I am!" and she said, "Oh yeah", and she turned round to Mum and said, "Oh, but you're going to help her raise him, aren't you?" and I said, "I am!"... That was my sort of 'sticking it up' other people!

II: “I really had no plans”: Pregnancy within the context of hopes and aspirations

I asked the young women about their hopes and aspirations around the time that they became pregnant. Their responses were surprisingly similar, and reflected the constraining influence of their familial, cultural and schooling narratives of self and identity, described in Part One of this chapter.

Emma talked about the “dead-end” nature of her work, and the absence of any longer-term plans, prior to becoming pregnant and returning to School.

I really had no plans. I couldn't see past the end of the day or the following day ... I had a dead end job, I never saw myself leaving it ... I didn't think I'd be able to get a better job, I never sort of tried, I was having too much fun – it was only part time, only 2 or 3 hours a day ... I never wanted kids, huh!

The aspirations of some of the young women also reflected the constraining influence of negative social discourse about teenage parenthood, described by Bullen et al. (2000, p. 453) in their report on the Australian WEETAG project:

One of the major problems ... is that young women are highly likely to accept such social stigmatising. The result can be a negative and self-limiting self-image, and an acceptance of extremely constrained options for the future. This generalisation about young mothers is embodied in the ways young mothers have to cope with the straight jacket of the stereotype, especially in the area of employment, education and training.

Kate recalled her “dismal” thoughts about her own future at this time, which contrasted markedly with her parents’ hopes and aspirations for her future.

I'd spent so long thinking about the future that when I had to, because I was pregnant, it all seemed a bit dismal and then I was also alone. I really felt alone. I knew that I had my parents but I thought, “It's going to be me and a baby and what am I going to do about that?” ... I did have a plan, I could always go back to the supermarket.

Andy was very clear about the familial and societal constraints that influenced her own hopes and aspirations when she became pregnant:

Um, (p) I don't think I had any, yeah. I honestly just thought I'd just plod along like my sisters did, you know, just be a mum and that was going to be my job and that would be it! You know, and maybe I'd work part-time as a cleaner or whatever, like the women in my family do! And that was enough ... you know, because ... I hadn't seen women, I suppose, um, with careers, so there was no kind of aspirations there, you know. No-one in my family had finished high school, no-one had studied, no-one had worked full-time. We were just a family of 'stay-at-home Mummies' who maybe worked a couple of hours in the evening and that was the life that I knew, so that was it. And I did kind of think ... maybe I could get a wee part-time job at the supermarket around the corner or whatever, but I didn't understand how childcare worked, you know, I didn't know about any of that kind of thing, I didn't know about the childcare subsidy! So it seemed like too much of a challenge. Even if I had known that sort of stuff, I probably wouldn't have done it anyway because I wouldn't have had the confidence to (p) ... And I suppose ... I just thought that it wasn't something that 17 year olds with babies did! Did they really get a job? I just didn't think that it was something I could do! Looking back I could have done that and it would have

been fine. But that's looking back at it with, you know, the confidence and all that kind of thing that I have now, but, yeah.

Tatiana was also definitive about her constrained employment options, prior to her decision as a new young mother to return to school to gain qualifications. She stated that had she not become pregnant, she would have been:

Working for [a hotel] still, maybe, or cleaning, working 9 to 5 in a crappy job ... I doubt I'd be doing anything really. I'd just be doing what I was doing which was nothing. I mean I was working, I always worked ... but yeah, I'd still be doing long hours for nothing in a crappy job that I don't really like that much ...

III: Pregnancy and parenthood as a turning-point in the fashioning of identities

A number of studies of teenage parenthood have discussed the effects of parenthood on the identities of young mothers. The findings of these studies reflect social constructions of the 'classed' context of normative and acceptable motherhood, as well as the constrained opportunities experienced by many teenage parents. SmithBattle (2006, p. 131) concluded that:

In the absence of middle-class pathways to adulthood, mothering can provide satisfaction and meaning, and contributes to a sense of competence ... for some teens. Many disadvantaged teens reorganize their lives and priorities around the identities and practices of mothering.

All of the young women talked about how pregnancy impelled them to start thinking about the future rather than 'living for the day', as they had done prior to becoming pregnant.

In her New Zealand review of research on teenage parenthood, which included the studies of Breheny and Stephens, Wylie (2009, p. 20) concluded that early motherhood is "an avenue for achieving fulfillment and identity in disadvantaged women". For the young women in my study, early motherhood had a motivating effect on their hopes and aspirations for the future. Only one of them, Andy, viewed her motherhood as an end in itself which precluded the options of further education or employment.

"You've got someone else to look after now": The responsibilities of new motherhood

From my own experience of working for a number of years with the young women in my study,

I observed that each one, in her own way, picked up the responsibilities of parenthood and, regardless of age, attempted to fulfil this role to the best of her ability. Each had familial support to a greater or lesser degree, and none was ‘turned out into the street’, as happened on rare occasions to some less fortunate young mothers, attending the School for Teenage Parents. Regardless of familial disappointment and anger, each family did its best within the constraints of its own resources and circumstances to support and accommodate its new role as whānau (family) to its daughter and grandchild. In several cases, the parents of the child’s father were also actively supportive, and have continued to play an important role in the life of their grandchild/ren.

The young women spoke about the changes that occurred in their identities as a result of their new status as parents. In several cases, significant life-style changes were made by the young women in order to accommodate their responsibilities.

In Kate’s narrative of her involvement with drugs, she had stated:

I started selling drugs. And then I got pregnant. So then it was all over.

She talked about the opportunity offered by her pregnancy to change her life style and identity from that of a “junkie”:

I knew I should use it to turn my life around. I knew I needed a change and I should just take it. It was selfish really. I knew that if I went on, I’d end up a junkie with a junkie baby.

Kate and her parents doubted her ability to pick up the responsibilities of parenthood. When her baby was born prematurely, this necessitated a number of weeks of care in the neo-natal unit. This was a turning-point for Kate, who recalls with some pride the effect of this experience on her new identity as a capable and committed parent.

It made me realise I had to be strong when he was sick. You just change when you become a parent. It showed me and my parents I could do more than I thought I could. They expected me to fall apart but I was there in hospital every day.

Emma also used her pregnancy to terminate her involvement with gangs and the underworld of drug dealing, and to choose a safer life-style in which to parent her child. Parenthood offered her hope for a future with exciting possibilities.

When I found out I was having Eli, I was more relieved than anything because it was something else to do, because I was in a really bad situation ... “You’ve got someone else to look after now” and I could just say, “Well, no, I’ll leave all that behind” ... I was excited, it was something new ... Before I didn’t know what I was going to be doing the next year but I knew this was going to be something completely different ... “Well, I can’t go back to that now, I’ll have someone else to look after”. It just wasn’t about looking after me, I had to look after me in a good way ...

For both Emma and Kate, pregnancy and parenthood could accurately be said to have ‘saved’ their lives by offering them a reason to escape the dangers of their existing life-styles. Contrary to public opinion about the negative effects of teenage pregnancy, research literature has many stories such as these of the life-changing opportunities that teenage parenthood provides for many young women to ‘turn their lives around’ (Collins, 2010; Hallman, 2007; Wylie, 2009).

“You just want to get your education done so that you can go and work and provide”

For the young women whom I interviewed, the experience of pregnancy, regardless of age, was a turning point in their lives and aspirations which prompted them to make significant lifestyle changes. It also prompted a transformation in their attitudes to education and the importance of school qualifications, to enhance their career prospects and life opportunities (SmithBattle, 2006; Zachry, 2005). Pregnancy and parenthood was, therefore, the first step in defining a new identity based upon being a ‘good’ and responsible parent, who needed education to expand her career opportunities so that she could provide a better life for her children. These new goals reflect the dominance of neo-liberal social discourse about what it means to be a ‘good mother’: one who is responsible and dedicated to the well-being of her children, whilst working in paid employment (Bullen, et al., 2000). They also reflect prevailing social discourse about the importance of education as a guarantee of future success (Patterson, et al., 2010).

This renewed interest in schooling and education was a significant change for the young women in my study, other than Anahera. As we have seen, they had predominantly been school averse

and had been regular high school truants. Three had been ‘stood down’, asked to leave or expelled from school, four had ‘dropped out’ or left school early and only Anahera had completed her five years of secondary schooling. For six of the ten young women interviewed, this meant that they had left school with few, if any, school qualifications.

In my focus group interview with Jade, Anahera and Rachel, we discussed the transformative experience of becoming a young mother on their identities, attitudes to education, and future goals. Jade, who was only fourteen when she had her child and, therefore, legally required to attend school, explained these changes in the following way:

I think that when you have children it changes you, who you are, because you’re thinking about what you’re going to do in the future so you kinda put your feelings aside about school and then you want to do something with your life so then you come back to school!

Anahera elaborated on the motivating influence of pregnancy and parenting, and the sense of responsibility that this new identity engendered. Her reference to the cultural narrative of the importance of ‘providing’ for your children indicates the significant change, in the past generation, in the discursive context of gendered parental roles and responsibilities.

I guess when you’re at high school, all you want to do is hang out with your friends and go out to parties and do all that stuff but when you have someone else involved, you know that you can’t just sit around and do that. You want to do something for them ... you just want to get your education done so that you can go and work and provide ...

Rachel talked about the positive impact of her new role as a parent on her life goals and identity:

Yeah, I grew up real fast. I knew that I had to do something with my life. Before I had [my child] I didn’t really have any goals in life but then, as soon as I had her, I knew it was time to change and then, given this opportunity [to return to school], it just changed who I am and my life just completely.

Most of the young women articulated the positive impetus of parenthood on their decision to return to school to gain qualifications which would enable them to secure ‘good’ jobs and to provide for their children.

Sam, who was sixteen when she enrolled at the School, recalled:

I began to freak out a bit because I realised my child was going to need things and I was going to have to pay for it, so that's what motivated me to get involved in the school. I knew I had to do something. I wanted to have a future, I wanted to be able to buy nice things, I wanted to go somewhere with my life.

As Zachry had also found in her North American study of teenage parents (2005), these extracts strongly contest the prevailing discourse that teenage parents are 'welfare bludgers', whose pregnancies are motivated by the intention to live on state support.

For Emma, at eighteen, the motivation to return to school was primarily for her son's benefit:

My son was the reason why I went to school but then once I was there, I sort of went, 'Oh! it's good for me too!'

Zena, who had experienced learning difficulties throughout her years of schooling, and had been 'stood down' at fourteen, when just pregnant, believed that parenthood gave her another opportunity to continue her education:

It was a second chance at school which I felt that I'd missed out on the first chance that I'd had.

Huia, at eighteen, was living in a violent relationship with the father of her child. She described her motivation to return to school:

[It was] to get away from him, I think, and to get my life on track and start doing things for myself.

In this chapter, I have examined how the narrative possibilities of self, available to the young women in my study within the contexts of family, schooling and wider society, served to frame and fashion their identities. Mostly these young women storied their own identities, their hopes and aspirations as constrained by unsuccessful school experiences and by, often difficult, familial, childhood and teenage circumstances. They also articulated the ways in which they actively resisted the narrative possibilities offered by these contexts. At some point in their teenage years, each of these young women became pregnant and chose to continue with her pregnancy despite,

in some cases, experiencing considerable pressure to terminate. Each has storied the positive impact of pregnancy on her sense of self, and her connection to a future in which she would be a 'good' parent, who would create a 'better life' for her own child. Linked with this goal was the young woman's decision to return to school in order to gain the qualifications she felt would be needed to achieve this success.

International research into teenage parents, discussed in Chapter Two, reveals that the motivation to return to school and gain an education appears to be widespread amongst teenage parents in developed nations (SmithBattle, 2006; Zachry, 2005). As already described, the United States has responded to teenage parenthood with a number of educational initiatives, some of which are compulsory, and linked to the payment of State support (Amin, et al., 2006; Scholl, 2007).

Whilst Britain has a national teenage parent policy which emphasises the importance of educational involvement as a protection against social exclusion, the small number of schools for teenage parents makes the practical realisation of this goal difficult (Lall, 2007).

New Zealand teenage parents currently have a choice of twenty dedicated Teen Parent Units in which to continue their education. Whilst this is insufficient to meet the educational needs of all teenage parents, it is certainly preferable to the situation that exists in Britain, and in many parts of North America.

In the following chapter, I will explore how the experience of attending a Teen Parent Unit, or School for Teenage Parents, supported the positive refashioning of the identities of my research participants as 'good' mothers, as capable and successful learners, and as young women with hopeful and positive futures.

Chapter Six:

The role of the School for Teenage Parents in the refashioning of students' identities

“Ka whangaia, ka tupu, ka puawai”
(“That which is nurtured, blossoms and grows”)
Whakatauki or Māori proverb (cited by Turia, 2012)

In this chapter, I draw on the narratives of the young women to argue that the students of the School for Teenage Parents were supported to ‘blossom’ as learners, as young parents, and as young women within a safe and nurturing school environment built upon warm, respectful and affirming relationships with teachers and other members of staff. I propose that this school environment was like a kaupapa whānau, a non-kinship family or community, which offered holistic support to its young women and their children. I argue that the School was able to support the positive refashioning of the young women’s identities by offering them narrative possibilities of self as successful learners, as ‘good’ parents and as valued and capable young people with hopeful futures. These narrative possibilities had not been readily available to the young women within the other contexts of their lives. Because this chapter is about the School for Teenage Parents, I will now refer to it by name as Pumanawa Young Parents College and will use this name throughout the remainder of my study.

As the last chapter demonstrated, dominant social discourse positions teenage parents in negative and limiting ways. It defines them as failed learners with lower academic ability than their non-parenting peers (Breheny & Stephens, 2007a; Woodward, Fergusson, et al., 2001). Such negative discourse plays its part in constraining the future employment and career possibilities of teenage parents, whose hopes and aspirations are characteristically more modest than those of their non-parenting peers (Bullen, et al., 2000; Patterson, et al., 2010). Teen mothers are also positioned outside the tenets of ‘good mothering’, being constructed in dominant social discourse as too young to parent well because of the non-normative age of their parenthood, within the context of current demographic and social trends (Breheny & Stephens, 2007b; Hallman, 2007; Wilson & Huntington, 2006).

The narratives in this chapter reveal that the young women in my study were very aware of negative social framing of their identities. Some of them storied themselves as contesting such negative discourse with vigour, whilst at the same time internalising its limiting and often crushing narrative constraints. As we saw in Chapter Five, most of the young women in my study had also experienced constraining narrative possibilities of self within the contexts of their own families, in their experiences of privation and disadvantage, of familial dysfunction and conflict. They had also experienced frustration and failure within the context of the conventional school system, in particular their high schools, where they felt anonymous and marginalised, and where their relationships with teachers were often conflict-based and unsatisfying. Pregnancy and parenthood served as turning points in the fashioning of the young women's identities, prompting them to make a number of positive life choices including their decisions to re-engage in education by enrolling at the Young Parents College. This, they believed, would support them in their new identities as mothers to create a better future for their children.

This chapter will show how Pumanawa Young Parents College was able to support the positive refashioning of the young women's identities by offering them powerful and affirming counter narratives with which to resist their constraining familial narratives of self, as well as the negative social discourse about their identities as failed learners and as teenage parents.

I have divided this chapter into two parts. Part One begins by considering the circumstances surrounding Andy's, Kate's and Tatiana's enrolment at Pumanawa Young Parents College. I remind the reader of how each young woman storied her own identity from the possibilities of her formative experiences of child- and teenage-hood, and also include my own 'story' of her when she started at the College. I then present three extended narratives of the College experience constructed from interviews with Andy, Kate and Tatiana. These are analysed in order to consider the narrative possibilities of self and identity offered within the cultural context of the College, and the role these possibilities played in the refashioning of the identities of each young woman. Part One uses narrative methodology in its presentation and analysis of data. By using this methodology, I am honouring the integrity of the young women's self-making, their individual voices, and their uniquely distinctive personal experiences.

In Part Two, I use a thematic approach to develop the themes drawn from the three young women's narratives of the College. I explore the narratives of experience of my other young women participants, in a form of co-construction or collaborative storying of the culture and practices of the College. This form of collaborative storying is "intrinsic to narrative research" (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006, p. 13). I have chosen this thematic approach in order to present a fuller picture of the College and its role in the refashioning of the identities of its young women students. In this way, I hope to present a form of "collective tale" of the College, from a range of perspectives (Plummer, 2001). The chapter ends by recounting some of the many achievements gained by each of my young women participants at the College, and considers how these achievements affected her sense of self and of future possibilities.

The use of Māori theories of human development and culturally responsive pedagogies

The importance of the affirmation of identity, and of supportive relationships with teachers recurred throughout the young women's narratives, when describing the College culture and practices. The language they used to identify what it was about the College that supported their learning and development was resonant of the language of Māori culturally responsive pedagogies, in which concepts of whakawhānaungatanga (the building of relationships) (Macfarlane, et al., 2007), awhinatanga (loving support), manaakitanga (the "building and nurturing [of] a supportive and loving environment"), mana motuhake ("the development of personal and group identity"), whakapiringatanga (the creation of "a secure, well-managed learning environment"), and kotahitanga ("a collaborative response" to improving educational achievement) are regarded as essential elements in a culturally safe and successful schooling environment (Bishop, et al., 2009, p. 737).

The young women also talked about components of ako or "effective teaching [and learning] interactions" (Bishop, et al., 2009, p. 737), such as learning partnerships between teachers and students, the importance of choice, the teachers' understanding of their students' individual learning needs, the use of one to one and small group instruction, the celebration of achievements, and the flexible and structured learning environments, which supported them to succeed as learners (Macfarlane, et al., 2008). And they talked about the holistic support they received at the College which contributed to their experience of well-being and success by

affirming their multiple selves and identities. In this way, the culture of the College reflected the principles of Te Ao Māori and the whare tapa whā model of human development comprising body, emotion and mind, spirit, and family, the nurturing of which are essential to personal hau ora or well-being (Durie, 1998; Macfarlane, et al., 2008).

I have therefore chosen to frame the analysis of the role of the College in the refashioning of the identities of its students by drawing on the language and concepts of Māori understandings of human development and culturally responsive pedagogies (Bishop, et al., 2009; Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Durie, 1998; Macfarlane, et al., 2007; Macfarlane, et al., 2008), which propose that acknowledgement and affirmation of identity are the foundation-blocks of educational achievement and success. These theories are indigenous to New Zealand and are, therefore, of particular relevance to the cultural context and circumstances of my study.

It is important to note that, whilst developed specifically to improve the experience and achievements of Māori students, the pedagogical practices identified by culturally responsive theorists such as Bishop et al. (2009, p. 738) in Te Kotahitanga have also been found to improve the results of other alienated students, regardless of ethnicity (Bishop, et al., 2009; Macfarlane, et al., 2008). The New Zealand Ministry of Education strategy, Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2008) also affirms that what is good for Māori is good for all students.

My study contends that the principles and practices of these theoretical frameworks were supportive not just to Māori but to all students at the College, particularly to those who had experienced alienation within their conventional schools and wider community. Most had experienced socio-economic disadvantage and family adversity, and Māori and Pākehā students, alike, were living within a dominant culture which disapproved of their 'early' parenthood, and their status as 'failed learners'.

Part One:

School ‘reports’

Reasons for enrolling at Pumanawa Young Parents College

Tatiana was the oldest of the three young women, and was working in the hospitality industry when she discovered she was pregnant at nineteen. In common with most of my participants, pregnancy and parenthood had acted as a catalyst for Tatiana to change her identity from that of a school ‘drop-out’, with limited career prospects. Motivated by the desire to be a good mother for her daughter, Tatiana decided to return to school in order to improve her life opportunities. She had learned of the College from a relative. When I asked her why she had enrolled at the College, she replied:

First it was, um, I sucked at school, as you know, really I just had a bit of crap going on and then I gave up at school. But when I got pregnant, I thought, “Oh, I’ve got to do something for her?” So ... it was [my daughter, Maia] like, if I hadn’t got pregnant when I did, I probably wouldn’t have done anything?... So she was the best thing for me in that way.

Kate had already dropped-out of school and was working in retail when she became pregnant at sixteen. She was less clear in her initial motivation to return to school. Experiencing the pressure of her parents’ desire that she continue with her formal education, she had considered enrolling in a local community college. When her mother learned of Pumanawa College from a friend, Kate reluctantly agreed to enrol, to please her parents. Her previous experience of schooling fuelled her initial uncertainty. Following the premature birth of her child, it became clear to Kate that the College was a supportive environment, and she decided to commit herself to attending, for her own benefit.

I wasn’t too sure when I first started? I was kind of like, OK, I might just (p) do this to make my parents happy? kind of – but um, when I had Adam ... and just the amount of texts, cards, people coming to visit me, and I was like, “Man, I’ve only been there like a month and everyone’s so like, supportive and they’re here to help me”. I was like, “No, I’m going to do this and I’m going to do it properly.”... It was for me, which was good.

Only Andy, at seventeen, had no educational aspirations when she enrolled at the College. Having already parented for more than a year, she was dissatisfied with the boredom, isolation and loneliness of her new identity as a home-based mother, and agreed to a referral to the College by her Plunket nurse.

Um ... I suppose I was just bored. It was something at the time that didn't seem to be a hard thing to do. I could just go to this place every day. I didn't have any educational aims. It wasn't, "Yoohoo, I can study and that will be really awesome!" It was more just, I was sick of sitting at home all day ... Gabe was over one. I was used to my role as a mum. And so I was just plodding along ... There were no big issues, you know, just every day was the same ... and I think because I was still living at home and it was hard being at home all day every day. It was kind of a bit isolating, I suppose.

Unlike the other young women in my study, pregnancy and parenthood had not kindled academic aspirations in Andy. However, whilst stay-at-home teenage parenthood was a fulfilment of her familial narratives of identity, Andy was not satisfied with this identity.

Andy

Andy's storied identity in her narratives of child- and teenage-hood

Andy's narratives of child- and teenage-hood (shared in Chapter Five: Part One) had revealed an angry, socially-isolated and depressed young woman, whose hopes and aspirations for her own (and her child's) future were constrained by her familial narratives of self. Andy had dropped out of school with no educational qualifications, and imagined that she would work part-time as a cleaner, or perhaps in a supermarket. The recurring identity themes of her narratives had been that life was a struggle, that she didn't belong in any of the contexts of her life, including family and school, and that any self-belief about her own abilities had been eroded by her life experiences. She storied herself as emotionally guarded, self-protected and lacking in confidence, and this was certainly how I experienced her in her first few months at the College.

My initial impressions of Andy

Resistant and volatile, I remember Andy as a significant challenge to all the staff at the College. We worked hard to win her over in those early months, encouraging her to give study a go and to

step out of her comfort zone in which she was prepared to risk nothing, because of what she described as her immobilising fear of failure.

Other students were also challenged by Andy's unapproachable and guarded manner and, in our interviews, Andy talked about just how difficult she had found it to make friends at the College.

Andy was extremely difficult to engage in the classroom, and angrily refused to attempt any study activities. At last, when we had almost given up hope of winning her confidence, Sophie [Andy's tutor] coaxed her into tackling a few simple Maths Unit Standards which she achieved easily. This was Andy's first taste of academic success. She was to become a 'stand-out' student of the College, attending for almost four years, and leaving as a mother of two children, with NCEA Levels One and Two (national high school qualifications) and a partially-completed tertiary Diploma. She had also won a prestigious scholarship to complete her tertiary studies.

Andy's story of Pumanawa College

Here is my reconstruction of Andy's story of the College. I have included the direction of my questions and have numbered the excerpts to assist with my analysis.

(1) I asked Andy about her experiences as a new student at the College.

I don't know what I had pictured it to be like but I was fresh out of high school and all those horrible teachers who didn't know you apart from your name. I didn't expect that level of – it was the support – I didn't expect that support to come from teachers, I didn't think they'd care so much... As much as I struggled with the work aspect of it, but you were there and you did what you did so well, and that was nice. You were soft and ... you cared, and that was important? Not anyone could do that job. Even Sophie, you and her had quite different personalities but you could see and feel that genuine love, you both really cared. That was overwhelming as well, it was a good overwhelming, like, "Wow!" It felt so special, it felt nice to have adults who cared about me in that way, who would say, "You're just being silly, you can do it." And for me to throw a hissy fit over school work and to have you guys talk to me about it. That was my way of dealing with stuff if it was hard. I'd kick and scream as a defence; if something's hard I just won't try it. And if you try and make me, I'd just get really angry cos it's better not trying it than failing. It's still a

stumbling block sometimes. It's just one of those internal things you learn to deal with. You don't get rid of it, you just learn how to talk yourself through it.

- (2) When asked about memories from her years at the College, Andy said:

I don't know. There aren't any specific memories, it's just the feelings. It was just the calmness and the routines. I suppose when you got used to the routines it just became a home away from home and you would sometimes look around and you'd think, "Actually I'm really bloody lucky!"

- (3) I asked Andy what she felt had supported her learning and development.

It was just the fact that it was, like the first couple of months wasn't about learning anything or about any kind of development, it was just about instilling those values in ourselves about a work ethic and building those relationships with you guys. If there wasn't such a strong relationship with you guys, such a support network, then none of those other things would have mattered, you know? Cos we were all there and all had children young for our own reasons, but we all had something within ourselves that we needed help with first. If we didn't have those relationships with you and the other teachers and if we didn't feel accepted – and it wasn't even about that – it was our feelings of self worth, none of us were going to achieve anything unless we sorted that out first.

- (4) I asked Andy to tell me how she felt Pumanawa College had treated her as a teenage parent.

It was your security blanket. You didn't feel any judgement in that environment. No-one made you feel like – in general society you were embarrassed in a supermarket, pushing a pram, or walking around with a big pregnant belly. It's just not the norm. Even now, with my experience, you just do look at young people. It's just not the social norm.

- (5) When you think about the College, what are some words that come up for you?

It was um, safety and security – you know, it was that constant thing: no matter what, we were all safe, we were all secure in our place there, you know, yeah, and it was, it was comfortable, there was such a strong sense of well being, it was just like a second home ... It was the smallness and that sense of family, of belonging to that place. Everything um,

everything worked so well ... that it was easy to get up at 6 in the morning to get picked up by the van at 8 o'clock – it wasn't a struggle, because I really enjoyed it.

(6) I asked Andy to tell me some of the things that had stayed with her from her experience at the Young Parents College.

The main thing that stays with you is the sense of belief in yourself and that confidence ...and ... because it's built up in you in subtle ways, you know? It's not like we all sat round holding hands, 'blimmin' hugging each other (laughs), you know, it just was part of what happens there, and so it stays with you, because it's not something that (p) you can be taught or you can learn. It just has to grow in yourself and so I think once that's there, it's, you know? And I mean, of course, like any other person, you still have times in your life when you're like, "Well, shit, this is hard!" ... but it's just that sense of knowing that you'll do OK. Yep! ... (Chuckles) It makes me feel, um, I still go, "Wow!! I did finish NCEA Level 1 and 2 in a year," ... and it feels a bit surreal thinking back on it ... It just still feels so nice, thinking about all that stuff, you know, because it was the first time in my life that I felt like I was achieving anything ... I think when you're first experiencing it you don't know how to handle it because it's actually quite a (p) - yeah, in my family you didn't show stuff like that. You didn't say, "That was really cool." (Laughs) Probably cos no-one ever did anything. (Laughs)

How Andy storied the influence of the College on her identities

This is the same young woman who had storied herself as an emotionally-neglected child, struggling to be acknowledged within her conflict-filled and "chaotic" family. In the first extract (1), Andy reprises her recent identity as a 'failed' learner, "fresh out of high school" where she had angrily contested school rules and her "horrible teachers", and had rejected (or been unable to accept) the narrative possibility of her own potential as a bright and capable student. The coping strategies developed by Andy to protect herself from failure, and to conceal her lack of confidence from teachers, were brought into the College environment where, in the early months, she threw "hissy fit[s] over school work", and didn't attempt anything if it was challenging (1).

Andy identified a number of aspects of her College experience which supported her own gradual transformation of identity from a fearful and angrily-resistant learner to a successful and

competent learner with a “work ethic” (3, 6); from a socially-isolated and needy young woman who lacked self-belief, and felt like a “misfit” in all the contexts of her life, to a more confident young woman who was able to build close and long-standing friendships with other students, and to enjoy nurturing and trusting relationships with teachers (3, 6).

In Andy’s narrative of her early experience of the College (1), she identified the impact of the unexpected care and support of teachers on her own transformation as a learner and a young woman. These nurturing and supportive relationships (the *whānaungatanga* and *awhinatanga* of Māori culturally responsive pedagogies) contributed to Andy’s “strong sense of well-being” and “belonging” (5), and to her willingness to engage in learning, and to confront her own fear of failure (1). She described how her teachers met her “hissy fits” and resistance with humour, encouragement, and confidence that she could succeed (1). And she talked about how she has learned, from this experience, to manage her “internal” responses to fear of failure by “talk[ing] [her]self through [them]” (1).

Andy believed that “learning and development” (my interview question) would not have taken place at the College without “such a support network” (3). The holistic support from teachers encouraged the young women’s “feelings of self-worth” (3) and enabled them to be learning ready.

Andy’s memories of the College are filled with ‘canonical’ metaphors of home and family: the “calmness and the routines” which made it a “home away from home” (2), the “security blanket” it provided against the negative judgements of society about teenage parents (4), the “safety and security”, the comfort and “sense of family”, the “second home” (5), all of which contributed to her “sense of well-being” and of “belonging”. These metaphors of ‘belonging’ evoke Durie’s (1998) *whare tapa whā* model of well-being, which includes *whānau* or family as essential to the development of individual well-being or *hau ora*. Andy’s observation that “it felt so nice to have adults who cared about me in that way” (1) resonates poignantly with her own familial experience of a “cold” and emotionally-unavailable mother, unable to fulfil her need for affection in a family home that was, in fact, anything but calm, secure and routine.

Andy’s final narrative recounted her achievements at the College, including her sense of self-belief and “confidence” which she stated grew naturally within the supportive environment of

the College, where for “the first time in my life ... I felt like I was achieving anything”. This narrative ended, somewhat wryly, with Andy’s comment about her lack of a familial repertoire to “handle” her success, “probably because no-one [in my family] ever achieved anything” (6). Andy had, in fact, become the first person in her family to succeed academically. The College had supported her to recognise her undeniable capabilities as a learner, and to value herself as a young woman with a bright and hopeful future ahead of her.

In the years that Andy attended the College, she would be supported to come to terms with a personal tragedy, and encouraged to confront and battle a number of her fears. These included her fear of driving – she took the first step in this battle by achieving her Learner Driver Licence at the College, and her fear of performing in public - Andy sang in the College choir at Prize Giving celebrations, despite maintaining that she had a terrible voice. She addressed a large group of professional and business women on two occasions: once on behalf of the College, in order to secure funding, and on the second occasion, to acknowledge receipt of her scholarship. On both occasions, she spoke about the positive influence of the College on her life. Andy was also to make a group of life-long friends at the College.

In her final year, I spent many hours as Andy’s tutor, assisting her with her tertiary diploma course and, oftentimes, doing gentle battle as I cajoled and encouraged her through periods of ongoing self-doubt – the “hissy fits” which continued to be her pattern of behaviour, but which no longer prevented her from attempting and completing assignments, often with outstanding results. I was greatly impressed by her clarity of thought and expression, and her fluent writing style. When Andy finally left Pumanawa, many aspects of her ‘personality’ had not really changed, but her experience of academic success within the “secure” and “supportive” College environment had helped her to develop the strategies and confidence to break through the barriers of self-doubt which had hitherto held her back. The College had supported the refashioning of her multiple identities as a highly capable learner, a competent and conscientious parent (of two children), a socially more outgoing young woman, and a young adult with the resources and self-belief which would assist her to transcend the constraining identities offered by her own familial, as well as social, narratives of self.

Kate

Kate's storied identity in her narratives of child- and teenage-hood

Kate had storied herself as depressive and anxious, and as an addicted drug user with a history of school failure resulting from her primary and high school teachers' inability to recognise that she was "smart", and to appropriately support her learning needs as a student with dyslexia. Family narratives of self were more ambitious than those of Andy and Tatiana, but Kate had little self-belief as a young woman and a learner and, as a result, had very constrained hopes for her own future. Socially isolated and mistrustful of others, she was guarded and well-protected but, unlike Andy, was quiet and non-confrontational, preferring to "slip between the cracks" (2) to avoid attention.

My initial impressions of Kate

Kate first visited the College with her mother, and I recollect her as a small, nervous, pregnant young woman who looked much younger than her seventeen years, and spoke in a soft, somewhat diffident little girl's voice. Her mother handed me a file of diagnostic testing which identified Kate's dyslexia and ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), and I recall wondering just how our teachers, none of whom were trained to support learning differences, would be able to adequately meet Kate's learning needs. Nevertheless, we enrolled her in the College and, after a month, she gave birth prematurely to her tiny son. Returning to the College when he was seven weeks old, Kate was difficult to engage in school work for about a year because of her ongoing dependence on drugs. Once she achieved a drug-free condition, which she did with assistance from the College support worker, Kate was emotionally and intellectually ready to give schooling another go. Attending the College for more than three years, she achieved NCEA Levels Two and Three, and commenced her tertiary preparatory courses before leaving to complete her degree.

Kate's story of Pumanawa College

Here is my reconstruction of some of Kate's story of her experience at Pumanawa College.

(1) The first response is a direct continuation of her answer to my question about her reasons for enrolling at the College, cited earlier in this chapter.

I just - I wasn't sure when I got there, whether it would be like school, like I was used to, and it was just different. I'd gone to [a girls high school] which was very structured, and not, no leniency – like they had rules and you stick to it. But at Pumanawa, it was just - everyone was there to help you and there was no kind of obstacle that we couldn't work through? So that was what I liked.

(2) So it felt different from your previous school experiences.

Mmm, yeah, and I was quite good at putting up walls, like, "I can't do this, I'm not smart". And it was just really nice to have people who wouldn't just accept that? Cos I was so used to people going, "Oh, OK, well you can go over there and do nothing!" So it was nice to have people go, "Ooh, why?" And I'd explain and they'd go, "Well, try this". Oh, (laughs) tricking me into doing work, making me feel good about myself, it's not fair! (Laughs) I'd been able to avoid everything at my other schools. Cos I'm not loud and I don't really get argumentative with people so, I'm very good at slipping between the cracks? But you can't really do that at Pumanawa.

(3) You mentioned people not really letting you do that?

Teachers, yeah, and students as well, just hearing them talk about their (p) love for the school, which was amazing – you kind of never really hear people say that, especially teenagers at high school? (Laughs) Mmm, you know, just that kind of environment where you kind of almost – it was positive peer pressure where you wanted to do well cos you were representing probably a small number of people that were trying to make a change in their life, so mmm.

(4) So how was it, coming into this new environment?

I think that's probably my only dislike, is that Pumanawa is a great place, but it's hard to break in because everyone's so tight and together, specially when you're pregnant cos you don't have your baby and that's kind of almost like your ticket [in]... Yes, I found it hard to talk to people and things like that. But, yeah, once I had Adam, that's when I really felt like I was kind of accepted? ... And also the teachers, what I didn't feel from the girls I got from the teachers?

(5) We then talked about Kate's return to the College with her new baby. She recounted how difficult she had found it to adjust to her role as a mother, to make new friends and to study at the College. She states she "was really mixed up and it was hard to settle down. It took me that whole year just to get back into it". This was compounded by her grief at the loss of her (difficult) relationship with her son's father, and his complete lack of interest in maintaining any contact.

(6) Were there things at the College that supported you with that process or did you feel like you were on your own with it all?

[The support worker] was there. And, oh, yeah, at the time I had quite a bad problem with drugs, if you remember – I'd forgotten that! (Laughs) It's been a while but, umm, and I didn't actually want to tell anyone, at that stage, cos I was quite scared that I'd get kicked out, even though I knew I wouldn't but – so I think I was holding that as well, inside. So I felt supported by [the support workers] ... but I wasn't ready to admit that I wasn't doing quite as well as I put it out that I was.

(7) We then discussed Kate's drug problem. Having stopped using drugs whilst she was pregnant, she started again when her baby wasn't sleeping well. "It kinda took on a life of its own ... I took marijuana to sleep at night then every day. It was really stressful." Kate described the "balancing act" of trying to parent well whilst keeping "a drug habit happy".

When I think back, I'm like, how did I get up in the mornings and get Adam ready and go to school each day! I am proud that I did that. I may not have done much work but at least I was there, and that's all that I really could do at that time!

(8) During the long summer break, Kate "kinda fell off the wagon". She was living away from home and everything seemed to fall apart. Her parents were looking after her son, and she decided, "I've got to take better care of myself and cope, before I even try handling what's going on with Adam ...". She decided to "shut [her]self in the house and gave up drugs".

Then I told [the support worker], which was good cos we started having weekly talks and once I started that, that was just what it took to keep me going. That was huge, just to get everything out ... She was great ... Then once that all kind of settled down, that's when I actually started doing work. And that's just rewarding in itself, cos once you start

succeeding in education, I don't think there's anything better, you just keep wanting to do more and more and more! (Laughs) So I probably did go into overdrive that year cos I was trying to distract myself...

(9) Tell me some memories of Pumanawa?

Just being in the classroom. Sophie, she was my teacher, all the time we'd do our weekly plan and I'd tell her, "Look Sophie, I've had enough, I'm over it, I'm leaving, I'll get a job in the Warehouse!" Sophie would say, "I don't know how you do it!" And then I'd say, "Ok, I'll do another book cos I'm so wonderful!" (Laughs) She really cared about what I was doing and she wanted me to really do well. Once I'd decided [to do my degree] that was a goal to work on, a big direction ... Sophie said, "You're actually really good at Maths." "No, I'm not!" "Well you are, so stop being silly!"

(10) When I asked Kate some words to describe Pumanawa, she chose the words 'supportive', 'partnership', 'encouragement', 'courage' and 'friends'. This is how she explained 'partnership':

... Working together for a common goal, I always felt that with the teachers, we were partners, we both were invested in my learning and we did it together and I could always rely on them to order my books and help me and they could rely on me to do my work when I said I would ...

(11) What was the school's perspective on teenage parents?

When I first started I thought it would be, "Poor little thing!" but everyone there, it was the one place where I felt I was OK, I was just like everyone else, it was like a wee bubble ... it was good ... I loved going out as a group, doing really fun things every week, like a family reunion dotted around [the city] where we'd go. The [childcare] staff just loved our children, they were great! It's hard as a young parent doing activities on your own ... and getting [negative] comments ... [At Pumanawa] you didn't feel like you were abnormal. You didn't feel self conscious. The group made you feel awesome!

(12) I asked Kate to tell me about some of her achievements at Pumanawa College.

When I came to Pumanawa, my plans changed. The supermarket wasn't an option anymore, there were bigger and better things to do and people liked me at school and they liked me for me! And they loved Adam!

I just really liked finding out that I could do Maths and Science again, having written them off as too hard ... It made me realise that I had worked hard and was going the extra mile ... I was trying hard and doing well ... The one thing Pumanawa showed me that a lot of people don't know is that education is not a competition. It's just for you, your own competition with yourself. I think that helps a lot cos we're all doing our thing, we don't need to compete with each other.

How Kate storied the influence of the College on her identity

Kate identified a number of aspects of her College experience which supported her own gradual transformation of identity from that of an 'impossible learner' to that of a competent and capable learner, whose hard work was rewarded with academic success or "good marks" (12). From drug-dependence, Kate became mostly drug-free (apart from alcohol). From being a young woman who had felt that "everyone hates me" because of her negative experiences of conventional schooling, she became socially more confident, making close and lasting friendships with other young women at the College, and developing reliable and productive learning partnerships with teachers, as well as trusting relationships with childcare teachers and support workers (8, 10, 11, 12).

In Kate's narrative of her early experience of the College, she identified the positive impact of the flexible and supportive culture in which "there was no ... obstacle" that couldn't be overcome, and "everyone was there to help you" (1). Her teachers' refusal to accept her self-doubts, and their offer of alternative approaches rather than ignoring her, as had happened in conventional school classrooms, made her "feel good about [her]self", and encouraged her to gradually abandon her learning-avoidance tactics, and to engage in learning tasks (2).

Support (awhinatanga) and the nurturing environment this created at the College, defined as manaakitanga by Bishop et al. (2009), is the underlying theme of all of Kate's narratives of her College experience. It was the support of the other students' "love for the school" which exerted what she identified as "positive peer pressure". This motivated her to want to do well because

she was now a member of a group of young people who “were trying to make a change in their life” (3). She loved the “awesome” feeling of belonging to the “family” environment of the College, where she was “just like everyone else” (11). The positive group identity, or *mana motuhake* identified by Kate as a feature of the College culture, is one of the goals of culturally responsive classroom practice (Bishop, et al., 2009). This positive identity supported Kate to challenge and resist the judgements of wider society about her status as a young parent. However, one negative consequence of the College’s close-knit group culture was that Kate (and other students) had found it “hard to break in” as a newcomer (4).

When Kate acknowledged her problems with drugs, it was the support she received from the College Support Worker which assisted her attempts to overcome her addiction, and enabled her to be learning-ready (6, 8). And it was the support of her learning partnerships with teachers, especially her tutor, Sophie, which encouraged her to believe in her own abilities and to persevere with her study goals when she felt overwhelmed by the work (9, 10).

As a result of these supportive relationships, Kate re-engaged in school work, experiencing for the first time the powerful rewards of educational success which motivated her to continue her studies (8). (This was something that I was to observe repeatedly in my work with young women at the College.)

In Kate’s more than three years at Pumanawa College, she ‘blossomed’ from a quiet and self-effacing ‘girl’ into an academically successful and more socially assured young woman. A committed and loving mother to her son, Adam, she had actively participated in the many cultural and sporting aspects of College life, becoming “a valued member of the netball team”, her “favourite thing”, and accepting opportunities to speak in public to service groups who wanted to learn more about the work of the College. She had largely overcome her mistrust of adults and stated she was “full of confidence”. She had also successfully resisted her relatively long-standing identity as a drug user. When she finally left the College, Kate stated “it was like leaving home for the first time”.

Tatiana

Tatiana's storied identity in her narratives

Tatiana was older and more mature than the other young women in my study. Living in a stable relationship with the father of her child, she was well-supported by him throughout the two years that she attended the College. Unlike Andy and Kate, Tatiana had storied herself as a competent young woman who was strong, responsible, controlled, self-reliant and resilient. Constructing her experiences of extreme family adversity and loss as “really contribut[ing] to me growing up”, she was certainly a survivor. Tatiana was motivated to improve her life circumstances for her new-born child, but was uncertain about how to achieve this goal. Working in what she described as a “crappy job” (12), her options and opportunities were limited more by her lack of familial resources, including knowledge and support, than they were by any lack of courage on her part.

My initial impressions of Tatiana

Tatiana was already nineteen when she decided to enrol at the College. Spending most of her first weeks in the Early Childhood Centre with her little daughter, I seldom saw her until she was ready to come into the classroom and engage in study. She was socially outgoing and straight-forward and readily made friends, once she had overcome some initial shyness. Like Kate and Andy, Tatiana was guarded with her classroom teachers in those early days at the College, bringing with her some challenging behaviours and attitudes acquired from her previous negative experiences of schooling, at which she stated she was “crap” and had “hated all her teachers apart from one”. Stubbornly independent and non-compliant, she required much ‘wooing’ and persuasion before she would agree to many of the simple requirements of College enrolment such as participating in sports and other non-academic activities, which she initially deemed a waste of her time. Although Tatiana was motivated to succeed and manifested a strong will and determination, she continued to struggle with academic work throughout her two years at the College. Nevertheless, with support from her teachers she achieved NCEA Levels One and Two and almost completed a tertiary certificate.

Tatiana's story of Pumanawa College

I have selected narrative excerpts from Tatiana's stories of Pumanawa which focus on her experiences of the Early Childhood Centre, because these featured prominently in her

conversations about the College. I have also included Tatiana's responses to my questions about her experience as a young Māori woman at the College. I have underlined words to which Tatiana gave special emphasis when she spoke.

(1) How was your experience of starting at Pumanawa?

... I spent most of my time in the childcare, cos Maia was so young – she was 6 weeks and she was 12 weeks when I started [in the classroom] so I was still all - (laughs). So, yeah, I got to know all the childcare teachers first before I got to know everybody else? ... In the childcare they were so – everyone actually, even like you was all OK with me to be in there for that amount of time?... It made it easier for me ...

(2) What are some memories that stand out?

Most of them were with Maia, milestones? Cos all her big first milestones were done at Pumanawa, pretty much, and if they weren't, they were influenced from there? Walking, she first walked at Pumanawa, and she first did everything there really, which was good for her because she developed sooo well. And friendships, a lot of good friendships that developed out of there ... The Pumanawa ones were really bonding ones? ... and because of our kids, it made it, like, adult friendships?

(3) So if I asked you about strengths and weaknesses of Pumanawa, what would you say?

Strengths? Umm, my course, (p) and the childcare, umm, everything about it. Like I spent a lot of time in there, hence I got the Awhina Award [an annual award presented to the young woman most actively involved in the Early Childhood Centre]. I (p) like that was my grounding place? Because that's what I was studying and that's where Maia was, and that's where I felt most comfortable like, from Day One? ... And a lot of things they taught me, helped me now?

(4) Can you think of an example?

Learning stories (laughs) was a biggie? Observations? Like one day I – when I first started, I'd go in there and I'd just sit back there with the girls and [the children] would all eat lunch and then they'd have their play ... and I'd watch Maia make this big mess on the floor almost every single day, until I did my studies, and I did the observation book and

then I observed [her] make this big mess on the floor with her little box and she wasn't really making a mess, she was studying them? ... Where I never noticed that? ... Cos I'd actually seen her play? Rather than watched her play?... It was real cool that day too, that was my first observation.

(5) Other things that you learned from that experience?

Umm, (p) self-discipline? Umm, (p) as you know, it was a bit of "I want it my way or the highway" pretty much, and I learned to just tone that down a bit, and [study] had to be done, regardless, and yous weren't there to make me feel crappy about doing it, yous were trying to help me get it done? ... At the start, I thought, "Just leave me alone!" (laughs) but then, yeah, like later I realised I wanted to be there ... I chose to be there, not you, you didn't ring me up and say, "Come!" And so I realised that I had to just stop being an egg, really, and put my head down ... Where yous could help me, then to take advantage of it ... there was all the rest of the people in the class as well, and instead of fighting with you at the time (laughs), just get over it and do it? Umm, yes, so I found that, that helped! Umm, what else? (P) ... Umm, without being up myself, I found myself to be quite – I already had a lot [of strengths], myself? Umm, I am a better parent than I possibly would have been if I hadn't had that experience?

At this point Maia woke up from her sleep and brought me a book to read.

That - reading? I hated reading, hated it! Now, I always make an effort to read to Maia cos of the Readathon [an annual reading challenge at Pumanawa, initiated by the English teacher to encourage the young women to read to their children]. I hated reading but now I always read to her to get our 2000 books [needed for the development of literacy skills], "Eh, Maia", before she turns five.

(7) I asked how Tatiana felt society had viewed her as a young parent?

Umm, they looked down on you! ... There is a lot of judgement on young parents ... I also found there was a lot of people out there who wanted to help you or didn't frown upon you. Like when I went to Plunket, when I walked in, cos they were all older than me – they were all over 25 – and they all looked at me and they were like, "Oh, here we go, here's another

one of these young ones”, which made me feel soo uncomfortable, but at the end of it, cos I just blew them all out of the water with the things I knew, cos I’m a real gatherer of baby information? And I showed them that, you know, we’re no different from what they are ... but I never went back, cos of that ...

(8) How about at school?

We were all teenage parents, so at the school it was like a safe haven. There was no-one looking down because that’s what we were? Cos no-one was any different from any other ones? So yeah, I felt real comfortable there (laughs). Yeah.

(9) One of the things that I want to ask you about, and I want you to feel you can be really frank about, is your experience as a Māori student at the College?

Me personally, umm, well I felt fully accepted. But then, umm, (p) yeah, I’m trying to think what I’m trying to say (laughs). But then, umm, I don’t feel like, I don’t feel any different? If you know what I mean, umm, like the girls and the teachers were all there, like whenever we were together there was no black and white and like Māori and Samoan and English – everyone was just everyone? Umm, it was good having the extra Māori put into the curriculum and that sort of thing, especially like in the childcare as well cos I had to learn that, but yeah, I felt accepted, personally?

(10) Tatiana recounted her experience of helping the Early Childhood Centre with the children’s kapahaka (Māori cultural performance) at the Prize Giving ceremony.

Lisa [an early childhood teacher at the College] was asking me if I ever did kapahaka, and I said, “Yeah, I did a bit growing up, and then I was in [a kapahaka group] but I also taught children at the church for my uncle ... and so she was like, “Well, we want to do kapahaka for Prize Giving!” and she asked if I wanted to have anything to do with it, and I was like, “I’d love to!” And Moana [another student], being Samoan, she did that part of it and I did the Māori. It was great fun! Like doing all the uniforms ... [Tatiana recounted how she and Moana helped to make the pois and the uniforms, explaining the appropriate protocols to the childcare teachers.] I got to keep my outfit, I was soo happy cos Lisa

*gifted it to me as a present at the end, cos she said, “Cos you’re leaving!”... It’s cool.
Maia loves it!*

(11) How did that make you feel?

It was good! Cos I, you know, I loved being involved with the childcare. But, being asked to do that, it made me feel like - I don’t know the word to say – like, I felt like my input was important to them?

(12) I asked Tatiana how she felt about leaving?

Horrible! I didn’t want to leave and I still wish I hadn’t! Oh, it was good but I so did not want to leave! It was so like a big part of my life ... and I still miss it. It’s so hard when I go out there and see all the girls. It’s good because, I mean I’ve flowered but ...I just miss it. It was such a big part of my life. And childcare ... It was the best thing I ever did ... and having her.

How Tatiana storied the influence of the College on her identity

For Tatiana, the greatest transformation of her identity was as a learner, with its positive implications for her future career prospects. In common with the other young women in my study, Tatiana had struggled to achieve at conventional school. Her experience of parenthood had induced a newly-found love of learning -“I’m a real gatherer of baby information” - which she had drawn on to impress the older parents in her Plunket group, and to counteract their prejudices towards her as a teenage mother (7). The College enabled her to access courses which supported this quest for parenting knowledge, and which opened up career opportunities hitherto unavailable to Tatiana. Whilst continuing to find study challenging at the College, she had worked hard to achieve her academic goals, acquiring a practical qualification which she was able to use in her own business once she left the College.

In Tatiana’s narratives, she identified a number of aspects of the College’s culture and practices which had supported changes in her identity as a learner, a parent and a young woman. These included the flexible and responsive environment which enabled her to spend as much time as she needed with her little daughter in the Early Childhood Centre (1), before she felt ready to engage in the classroom. She identified the Centre as her “grounding place”, where she felt most

“comfortable” (3) and where her daughter, Maia “developed so well” (2). The early childhood teachers helped her to better understand the developmental significance of her daughter’s play (4) and, later, to set up her own home-based business by providing her with useful (and costly) resources (discussed in interview responses not included here).

Tatiana believed that her attendance at the College and Early Childhood Centre had made her “a better parent than I would have been if I hadn’t had that experience” (5). She cited examples such as reading to her daughter (an activity she had previously hated), which she attributed to the encouragement of her English teacher at the College (5).

The College environment provided a “safe haven” against the negative judgements of ‘society’, supporting and normalising Tatiana’s identity as a young parent who was “no different from any other [students]” (8). It also affirmed her identity as a Māori woman by acknowledging her cultural expertise and knowledge, and eliciting her support with the children’s kapahaka performance (10, 11). Tatiana appreciated “having the extra Māori put into the curriculum [such as mau rakau, the celebration of Māori language week, and Matariki]... especially ... in the childcare” (9). This cultural validation, which gave her the opportunity to engage in tuakana-teina relationships (in which she was able to guide others), made her feel “accepted” and valued, “[as if] my input was important to them” (11) and supported her feeling of belonging at the College (Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Macfarlane, et al., 2007; Macfarlane, et al., 2008).

Tatiana felt that the support she had received from her teachers had helped her to become more “self-disciplin[ed]” as a young woman, and to “tone ... down” her desire to “want it my way or the highway”, accepting that the College teachers were there to help her and not to control her (5). She felt that she had “flowered” at the College (13), and her partner, Mike, agreed that Tatiana’s College experience had “been good for her. It’s given her the motivation to study ... She’s definitely a lot more confident”.

In her two years at the College, Tatiana overcame her resistance to participating in the wide range of activities that comprised College life, performing at Prize Giving ceremonies, gaining her Full Driver Licence and First Aid Certificate, taking a leadership role in welcoming and including newer members of the College community, and demonstrating her inherent cultural attributes of hospitality (manaakitanga) when guests visited. She formed “really bonding ... adult

friendships” at the College (2), and was widely-liked and appreciated, particularly by the early childhood teachers. She was a devoted and capable mother and was often to be found in the Early Childhood Centre assisting other young women with their children (another example of tuakana-teina relationships in practice).

As her tutor, I spent many hours with Tatiana, and gradually over the two years of her enrolment, she shared with me aspects of her life story which came up naturally in the context of her particular course of study. Tatiana could be challenging to work with because of her strong streak of stubbornness, her tendency to inflexibility and her need to be in control, but as I came to know and understand her within the context of her life experiences, I could only admire her courage and self-possession, and appreciate that it was these very traits that had enabled her to manage her experiences as well as she had (Collins, 2010). Tatiana was very sad to leave the College, which she described as her “second home” and “the best thing [she] ever did” apart from having her daughter (12).

Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I argued that teenage parents are positioned in negative and limiting ways within prevailing social discourse. Most of my participants had also experienced constraining narrative possibilities of self and identity within the contexts of their own families, as well as within the conventional school system, in particular high school. Defined as failed and “impossible” learners, their sense of self and of future possibilities, including employment and career options, were constrained by such discourse. Because of the non-normative age of their parenthood, they were also positioned outside the tenets of ‘good mothering’. The young women in my study were very aware of the negative social framing of their identities as learners and as mothers.

The three young women, whose narratives feature in Part One of this chapter, storied their experience of the College environment as supportive and transformational, because it offered them affirming counter-narratives as ‘good mothers’, as successful learners and as unique and worthwhile young women with hopeful futures. These counter narratives, normalised within the encouraging and responsive College environment, supported the young women to resist the constraining narrative possibilities which had served to frame and shape their identities.

This was a gradual process, taking place over a period of two or three years of almost daily attendance or immersion in the College culture and environment.

Although freely choosing to enrol at the College, each young woman had nevertheless been reluctant to engage in school work, having to be coaxed and gradually won over by her teachers. Over time, each was supported to experience the empowering rewards of academic success at the College and, in the case of Andy and Kate, to claim (or re-claim) her identity as an academically capable and competent learner. Each was able to participate in a wide range of cultural, creative, sporting and other non-academic activities, identifying these rich experiences as contributing to her enjoyment and sense of belonging at the College. Each young woman made what she defined as life-long friends at the College, and each felt like she was “leaving home for the first time” when she finally left the College to continue her life path, ‘out in the world’. In contrast to the negative social views of her status as a teenage mother, each young woman felt affirmed in her mothering role, which was normalised, supported and celebrated within the context of the Young Parents College.

In her work on the benefits of culturally responsive education, Gay (2000, p. 32) argued that:

Because culturally responsive teaching is empowering, it enables students to be better human beings and more successful learners. Empowerment translates into academic competence, personal confidence, courage, and the will to act.

The stories of Andy, Kate and Tatiana suggest that they were empowered and, in fact, transformed as learners, as young mothers and as young women by their experiences of cultural responsiveness within the College environment. In defining some of the College’s cultural practices which supported their transformation, they identified the flexible, nurturing and responsive learning environment, which helped them to succeed academically (manaakitanga); the supportive and encouraging relationships with classroom and early childhood teachers and with other members of staff (whānaungatanga); the safe haven they experienced as members of a school community which normalised and affirmed their identity as teenage parents (mana motuhake); the opportunity to make close and lasting friendships with other teenage parents (whānaungatanga); the holistic support they received as mothers, learners and young women

(whare tapa whā); and the empowering and nurturing experience of belonging to a ‘family’, or ‘home away from home’ (kaupapa whānau).

These themes will be further explored in Part Two, drawing on short narrative extracts of the experiences of the other young women participants to see how they storied the culture and practices of the College and its impact on their identities as learners, as parents and as young women. In this way I hope to provide a richer description of the College’s culture and practices (Geertz, 1973). The chapter ends by recounting some of the achievements gained by each of the young women while attending the College, and the effects these had on her sense of self.

Part Two:

Kaupapa whānau: The College and Early Childhood Centre as family

In the second part of Chapter Six, I develop the themes drawn from the narratives of the three young women, featured in the first part of this chapter, to further explore what it was about the culture of Pumanawa Young Parents College that supported the refashioning of the identities of its students. As we have seen, these cultural practices resonated with Māori theories of culturally responsive practice, which argue that academic achievement of underachieving Māori students is enhanced by acknowledging and affirming their cultural identities, and by supporting them to feel nurtured and ‘at home’ within the whānau-based classroom environment. Particularly relevant are the theories of Bishop et al. (2009) applied in Te Kotahitanga’s Effective Teacher Profile; of Macfarlane et al. (2007) in their work on creating culturally-safe schools; of Macfarlane et al. (2008) in their ‘conversation’ between indigenous epistemologies and the national curriculum; and of Durie (2001) in his whare tapa whā model of holistic and healthy human development.

The proceeding sections support the findings of Part One of this chapter that the nurturing, whānau-based culture of Pumanawa Young Parents College and Early Childhood Centre provided a “second home” or kaupapa whānau (a non-kinship community group which has a common vision and purpose, and functions as a family) for all its members (Lawson-Te Aho, 2010). This cultural context offered the young women different discursive constructs or counter narratives about their possible identities. It was these affirming narratives of self that had the potential to positively recreate the identities of the young women as learners, as parents and as young women.

In Part Two, I have drawn on the narrative accounts of all of the young women participants, presenting these in five sections, each of which offers a window on the College’s culture as kaupapa whānau and its role in supporting the refashioning of its students’ identities. These sections include stories of the classroom experience; stories of the early childhood centre; relationships with peers; the role of support workers; and the provision of other support services at the College.

I have used the themes drawn from the narratives to structure the presentation of each section. However, the features of culturally responsive pedagogical practices which these themes describe are neither distinct nor separate. Rather, they work together as aspects of an integrated whole, just as their practitioners and the young people whom they serve are whole human beings.

The thematic approach used in this section differs from that used in Part One of this chapter, in which the extended stories of Andy, Kate and Tatiana were given primacy. I have chosen this thematic approach in order to present a form of rich “collective tale” of the College and its role in supporting the refashioning of the identities of its students (Plummer, 2001). The chapter ends by recounting some of the measurable learning achievements gained by each of my young women participants within the supportive culture of the College, and looks at how they storied the effects of the College experience on their aspirations, identities and sense of self.

There are many other aspects of the College culture and practices which I have not included here because of space limitations. These limitations have enabled me to include only those aspects which were identified as important influences by all of the young women participants.

“It’s hard to break in, cos everyone’s so tight and together”

Whilst the young women commonly used metaphors of ‘home’ and ‘family’ to describe their experience of the culture of the College, this had by no means been an immediate or instantaneous experience for them. Kate recalled our first meeting when she visited Pumanawa, and my endeavour to reassure her by saying that the College was rather like a family. She remembered thinking, “‘No, not my family!’ ... but when I left, it was like a community, we all looked out for each other”. Apart from Anahera, all of the young women in my study articulated how nervous they had felt as new members of the College community.

Whilst nervousness is a common experience for anyone entering a new employment or educational setting, this was intensified for the young women by several factors. Most had been alienated by their experiences of conventional school and were fearful that the College would be no different. They also lacked belief in their own abilities to achieve as learners, within an educational setting. As well, the small size and close-knit culture of the College made it particularly difficult to ‘break into’ the group as a newcomer. As Kate had said, “Pumanawa’s a great place, but it’s hard to break in, cos everyone’s so tight and together”. This was made more

difficult by the fact that the young women and their children were enrolled at the College throughout the school year, which enhanced their initial feelings of isolation and anxiety. Only Anahera had had the good fortune to start at the beginning of the year as part of a group of new students and, because of this, her experience of settling into the new environment was made easier than that of the other participants.

In the time frame of my study, the College had not developed sufficiently effective protocols (kawa) with its existing students to ensure that incoming young mothers felt adequately welcomed and supported by their peers. Protocols with staff were much better developed and the young women in my study stated that they felt welcomed by all staff members, both in the classroom and the Early Childhood Centre. As Sam said, “All the teachers were really great, really nice and welcoming, and just so easy going”.

Once the young women had acclimatised to their new environment, they all enjoyed their experience there, expressing feelings of pride in themselves as young parents, who had chosen to return to school. A number of factors contributed to their positive experiences of the College and its role in the refashioning of their multiple identities, and these were articulated by the young women in the following accounts.

I: Ako: Culturally responsive teaching and learning relationships

The young women were articulate about the pedagogical practices which supported them to feel part of the College whānau, to be learning ready, and to succeed academically, despite their previous experiences of failure and alienation as learners in the conventional school system. The following themes are drawn from responses commonly shared by most of the young women to my questions about the College.

“All the staff members are so supportive here”: Whānaungatanga

When I asked the young women how the College had differed from or been similar to their previous schools, what had helped them to feel part of the College community, and what had supported or not supported their learning and development, they consistently responded by talking about their close relationships with their classroom teachers at Pumanawa. Described by the young women as caring, supportive and respectful, these relationships were highly

valued, and contrasted markedly with their negative anecdotes about relationships with teachers at what they called “normal” or “real” high school.

From the comments of the young women participants, and those of Pumanawa’s teachers (not included here), it was evident that the teachers at the College accepted the importance of their role in creating positive learning experiences and outcomes for their students, based upon a foundation of caring relationships. This contrasts with Bishop and Glynn’s (2003) findings about the limiting beliefs of high school teachers with regard to their own ‘agency’ in effecting successful educational outcomes for (Māori) students from deprived home backgrounds. Bishop et al.’s. (2009, p. 736) Te Kotahitanga model of culturally-responsive classroom practice was built upon the concept that “classroom caring and learning relationships [are] at the centre of educational achievement”. In Cavanagh’s (Macfarlane, et al., 2007, p. 69) ethnographic study of one New Zealand school, he also argued that “relationships [are] the core element” of cultural safety in schools and are, therefore, linked to successful achievement.

The development of close and nurturing relationships between teachers and their students was greatly assisted by a number of factors, including the small size of the College which usually had about thirty young women on its roll, and by the high teacher to student ratio of 1:10, a ratio found also in New Zealand’s alternative schools. All the teachers worked together in the main classroom of the College, with the result that, regardless of individual subject choices, all students and teachers were on familiar terms. This was reinforced by the practice of addressing each other by first names, sharing facilities for eating and recreating together, and participating together in sports, cultural and other activities such as singing with the children, which were all part of the College programme.

The sharing of facilities enabled staff and students to develop close relationships outside of the normal structural boundaries which exist in the conventional school environment. Anahera’s narrative shows how this practice gave teachers further opportunities to express their interest in the young women as people with lives beyond the classroom, for which they sometimes needed extra support.

Even just like at lunch times or morning tea times, everyone was comfortable talking to each other, like the teachers would check up on you, see how everything was going, even if it wasn't related to education. I don't know, they were just interested in what you were doing, and you know, they could tell - if something seemed not quite right, they'd come and talk to you, and they'd direct you to the social services people there, if you needed that.

In their interviews, the young women described a school environment at Pumanawa in which they felt acknowledged and affirmed as capable learners, as good parents and as unique and special young women who were worthy of their teachers' caring concern. They talked about the powerful impact this had on their sense of self, on their academic achievements and on their attitudes to teachers and the College.

Anahera identified a direct causal connection between the young women's success as learners and the support they received from their teachers.

I think that our success has a lot to do with the support that you get here cos all the staff members are so supportive here. And if none of us had that, I don't know whether we'd have gone as far as what we had.

Whilst Anahera had already experienced learning success and acknowledgement in the conventional school system, for many of my participants, academic achievement at Pumanawa was their very first experience of success as learners. This new-found success supported the reframing of their negative identities as learners, and motivated their ongoing efforts to strive for success.

For some of these young women, familial and other relationships with adults had been conflict-based and inconsistent. Their experience of caring relationships with teachers at Pumanawa supported their emerging sense of self and identity as valued young women, worthy of the consistent care and concern of others. Andy compared the supportive responses of Pumanawa's teachers with the punitive responses of teachers in conventional schools:

Seeing you struggling and asking if you were OK and, "What can we do for you? Do you need to go and talk to [the support worker]?" You know, "Do you need some time out?" You don't get that at [conventional] school. You get a detention! (Laughs)

When they enrolled at the College, the young women mostly shared youth culture's widespread negative narratives about teacher/student relationships. They were conscious that it was not culturally normative to admit to liking teachers and school. Emma's comment acknowledges the subversion of these prevailing cultural narratives at Pumanawa:

It's very strange but it was like you were allowed to like your teacher [at Pumanawa]. At high school that was awful.

Positive attitudes to teachers and the College were modelled by the older students in their tuakana - teina relationships with newer students. Kate also commented on the normative counter narrative of "love for the school" expressed by the students at Pumanawa.

Students ... just hearing them talk about their (p) love for the school, which was amazing – you kind of never really hear people say that, especially teenagers at high school?

This love for the school, which was based upon the caring and reciprocal relationships between teachers and students (whānaungatanga), had a transforming impact on the young women's attitudes to teachers and to educational contexts.

"You're young and you can do all these things": Commitment to academic success

As Gay (2002, pp. 109-110) argued, culturally responsive teachers "have to care so much about students and their achievement that they accept nothing less than ... success and work diligently to accomplish it". The young women's stories revealed their teachers' commitment to their academic success, regardless of how much effort this required. This contrasted with their experiences of their high school teachers, whom they felt had avoided working with them because they were not 'worth the effort' when compared with other more rewarding students. The 'deficit' thinking, which appears to have underpinned their high school teachers' pessimistic expectations of them as learners, locates responsibility for educational underachievement on the learners themselves, and on their home environments (Bishop, et al., 2009). Low teacher expectations may also account for the poor academic outcomes of students in a number of more traditional teen parent schools in the United States, whose results have been attributed to a focus on remedial programmes with limited academic goals (Hallman, 2007; Roxas, 2008).

By contrast, teachers at Pumanawa College shared the assumption held by successful alternative educational providers that “all young people have the capacity to learn and gain school credentials as long as the educational environment is right” (te Riele, 2007, p. 56). They were committed to nurturing the unique talents of each of their students, as articulated in the College Vision Statement (Hindin-Miller, 2006b), see Appendix D, and in Te Ao Māori pedagogies (Macfarlane, et al., 2008).

The following comment by Kate is taken from a focus group discussion with Emma and Andy on this topic:

So we weren't hard work [at Pumanawa]. Did you guys ever get that when you were in high school? Your teachers saw you as hard bloody work so they'd avoid you like the plague! ... Cos if you were quiet and sitting over there and drawing pictures ... But like, the teachers at Pumanawa wouldn't put up with that, it would be like, “Well, what are you doing, Kate?” ... And we'd be staring out that window and they knew that, walking over to you, it would probably be hard work to get you back on task but they did it, they didn't just see it and go, “Oh God, I won't do that, I'll stay with this person cos they're actually doing something and all that”.

In my interviews with Pumanawa's teachers, they had observed that in the conventional programme-driven school system, teachers were unable to support those students who were disengaged or falling behind in their work, because of rigidly constraining curriculum schedules. For the young women, this avoidance by teachers in the conventional school classroom had been experienced as lack of care, and had confirmed their identities as difficult and unrewarding learners who were “hard bloody work”.

The commitment of Pumanawa's teachers to their students' learning success provided powerful counter narratives about their worth as young people and as capable learners, enhancing their personal confidence and self-belief. Emma talked about the impact on her sense of self-confidence of these hopeful narratives of identity:

It was like, “You're young and you can do all these things!” Now I realise that I can do it.

Tatiana explained how her teachers' efforts to assist her, and their belief that she could achieve, had "got the hate out of" learning activities and had encouraged her to want to study:

At Pumanawa ... they wanted to help you and ... I felt comfortable ... they just helped me where I needed it and they pushed me without pushing me ... They got you to want to do it, like you can achieve ... I hated English but [the English teacher] got me to do it ... No way any teachers could get me to do that at high school. She got the hate out of it ...

Sam told a story about the mentoring assistance she had received from one of her teachers at Pumanawa, which had guided her choice of career and had supported her to succeed in her tertiary course even after she had left the College.

[The teacher] was great, she helped me a lot, she kind of helped me decide where to go ... she pointed me in that direction and she was really great, really helpful ... She helped me even after I left and I'd go around there and she'd help me with my assignments and my grammar and my research and help me with things that I was terrible at ... she probably taught me most of the stuff that I had to learn anyway ... she was just great and she was available ...

As part of its commitment to the young women's "success", the College regularly celebrated and commemorated important events such as births (and deaths), twenty first birthdays, educational achievements, the passing of Driver Licences and First Aid Certificates, successful Reading Challenges, and sporting and cultural achievements. Some of these commemorations incorporated the culturally respectful use of prayers (karakia), informal greetings (whakatau) and the sharing of food (kai). Kate talked about her delight at receiving a cake (one of the College's celebratory rituals) on the accomplishment of each level of NCEA.

I think the best part of getting NCEA Level 2 and 3 was the cake! I don't think anyone else gets a cake when they get NCEA.

The ritualised marking of such important achievements and personal milestones was identified by Cavanagh (Macfarlane, et al., 2007) as a necessary component of learners' cultural safety and affirmation of identity at school. These celebratory practices enhanced the culture of success at the College, and supported the feeling that the staff and students were members of an extended

family or close-knit community. Sam talked about how much she had valued the annual prize giving celebrations, which were well-attended by extended family and members of the wider community including the media.

Prize Givings were great!! ... what made them stand out was because everyone's family was there and they all got to see what you'd been doing that year and how well you were doing and it was just nice, everyone was there and people would show up to watch and people would miss work to be there ... that was good.

Te Riele's (2007) Australian study of successful alternative educational programmes identifies the provision of access to recognised educational credentials as an important component. For many of the young women, the College provided their first experience of academic success and this had a transformative effect on their sense of self worth as young women and as learners. The public acknowledgement of their successes, which was often accompanied by photographs in the local newspapers, enhanced their sense of pride in themselves as students of the Young Parents College, and acted as an effective public and personal contestation of the negative discourse about their identities as failed learners and as teenage parents.

***“They all knew the best way that I was taught”*: Understanding of individual learning needs**

More than half of the young women participants had come to the College with a range of learning challenges including dyslexia and problems with literacy and numeracy, which had detrimentally affected their educational experiences and achievements at conventional schools. Apart from Anahera, they had all either dropped-out of school or, in the case of Jade and Sam, had left because of pregnancy.

One of the keys to the educational success of the students at the Young Parents College was their teachers' understanding and accommodation of their individual learning needs. They were aware that “mainstream education [had been] inappropriate to the needs of ... [these] young people” (te Riele, 2007, p. 56).

Jade's observation was a view commonly expressed by all of the young women.

They all knew how I was taught, like what was the best way that I was taught, as well.

Zena had significant problems with literacy when she enrolled at the College and, because of this, had found the pressure to achieve at conventional school very stressful. Her experience in the more responsive and flexible Pumanawa classroom had supported her individual learning needs and she was able to achieve NCEA Level One, a goal which had previously seemed unattainable. She described her positive experience of the “more relaxing” and less pressured Pumanawa classroom in the following recollection, identifying how she had benefitted from one to one and small group instruction, as well as from being allowed to work at her own learning pace with less pressure from teachers:

Pumanawa was not so structured as normal school, you were not forced to do anything that you didn't want to do ... that's what made it more relaxing ... when you're forced into something that you're not ready for, that makes it hard and that's what I found at school ... the pressure of it. At Pumanawa, "It's OK, take your time," which was really good ... It's not all about, "Sit down and do this and read this and study and study and study!" It's relaxed and you can study at your own pace ... You did one on one, which was good, or a small group, just of three students with one teacher ... it just helped a lot more. I think the support I got there and the help from teachers made a difference ... with someone else explaining it to you and that you understand and it makes it so much easier.

Zena's comment reflected the teachers' observations about the pressures of the programme-driven conventional school system, which so often left behind struggling students. For Zena, her teachers' understanding of her individual learning needs had supported her confidence and success as a learner, and had made her learning experience more enjoyable than at conventional high school.

Several of the young women also spoke about how their learning and achievement had been supported by the weekly setting of goals with their tutor, as part of the College's individualised learning programme. Rachel said:

Goal-setting was a big thing because we were big on goal setting and having to achieve those each week made you work for it – that helped me quite a bit and other than that, they'd make sure you were doing alright, like keeping on top of everything.

“You didn’t feel like a school student”: Being treated like an adult

The young women also appreciated their teachers’ respectful acknowledgement and affirmation of their identities as young adults, regardless of their age, because of their status as parents. This transformed their learning experience, and reframed their understanding of themselves as learners, rather than as “school students”, with its demeaning implications of subordination in the hierarchical structure of the conventional high school learning environment. As Emma said:

It was a lot more relaxed, you wouldn’t get into trouble for saying anything. You didn’t feel like a school student. They made you feel a lot more like an adult and that was good.

Jade, who was fourteen when she enrolled at the College, believed that the common identities which the young women shared with their teachers as parents of young children contributed to these “equal” relationships:

And they treat you like equals, they don’t treat you like you were a child at school, they treat us like we’re adults because we are parents and they’re parents as well, so you can kind of relate on those levels as well.

Kate talked about this aspect of the young women’s relationships with their teachers in terms of the absence of a power imbalance. This redefined their identities as learning partners, rather than as teachers and pupils.

That power balance. It wasn’t like I’m a teacher, you’re a pupil ... I always felt that with the teachers, we were partners ...

One of the classroom teachers had also articulated this difference between relationships at Pumanawa and those in the conventional school system. She believed that this “loss of power” would be challenging to many conventional school teachers. Bishop (2003, p. 223) argued that redressing the “structural issues of power and control” in mainstream schools, as part of a kaupapa Māori approach to education, “will eventually benefit all students”.

An example of this respectful and collaborative approach to teacher/student relationships was in the choices the young women were given. They were consulted about the courses they studied and when they would study them, whether they wanted to attend the College four or five days a week, programme activities, employment of new members of staff, even about the right to smoke

outside the school grounds during the school day. In fact it was the young women's choice to return to school (unless, like Jade and Zena, they were under sixteen and were legally required to attend school). The young women identified their right to choose as an important part of their commitment to the College. Their views reflect kaupapa Māori educational principles (Macfarlane, et al., 2008) and support Bishop et al's. (2009) argument that a collaborative response to classroom relationships empowers students "when they are taken seriously ... as knowledgeable participants in learning conversations, and ... motivate[s them] to participate constructively in their education" (p. 735).

Andy talked about the significance of choice and its impact on the young women's identities as competent young adults, in the following excerpt:

It just fits within the whole ... philosophy of the place, I suppose, in that we were not viewed for our age, we were viewed as competent young adults who could make those choices for ourselves in everything, in what we studied. Of course we were given guidance with all that stuff to make the best choices possible, but ultimately everything was our choice.

My interviews with a number of the young women participants revealed how important it was for them to have the choice to smoke during the school day. This was an issue of some ambivalence for Pumanawa's staff because of the school's emphasis on healthy life-styles. Smoking cessation programmes and incentives were part of Pumanawa's attempts to support the young women to stop smoking. However, those young women who chose to smoke at school felt that this was part of Pumanawa's acceptance of, and respect for, them as young adults. As Andy said:

Being allowed to smoke was just another example of how we were given information and that we were shown that we were respected enough to make our own decisions, that you guys gave us all the information about smoking and healthy eating and exercise – all that stuff, but then ultimately we were seen as mature enough to make our own decisions about that kind of thing.

An alternative perspective about the smoking culture of the College was presented by Emma, who felt that this made it very difficult for young women who wanted to quit smoking.

One thing I really didn't like, and you and the teachers tried to not make it, but it was very - there were a lot of things that people did out of class that revolved around smoking ... and I quit smoking while I was there but it was just so easy to fall back into it ... Probably if you'd never smoked it was easy but if you had ... cos a lot of conversations and things happened out at the gate ... you'd get talking to someone and it was like, "Oh, we're going to go out and have a smoke", and you'd say, "Oh, I'll just go with you", and once you were out there you'd go, "I may as well have a smoke then".

Three of the young women stated that they appreciated the College's (unauthorised) policy of allowing them to choose whether they attended school four or five days a week. This practice acknowledged the busy lives of the young women as mothers with significant domestic responsibilities, which they had to manage in conjunction with their commitments as full-time students. Attending the College required the women who travelled by bus to leave home with their children between 8.00 and 8.30 in the morning, returning home between 4.15 and 5.00 pm. It was a long school day and allowed little time for other commitments. The fifth day off school was optional so that they could attend appointments, do their shopping and domestic chores and spend time with their children. Some of the women chose to attend College five days a week but those who didn't, agreed with the following observation by Sam.

The one day off a week to get your errands done was really helpful. Cos you could get your WINZ (Government welfare agency) appointment, your doctor's appointment, your shopping, it was great.

In te Riele's (2007) study, she found that those stable, long term alternative education programmes, which accepted that mainstream education did not work for all students, were most successful in offering "opportunity and hope for marginalised young people" (p. 64). Pumanawa Young Parents College was an example of one such alternative which, according to the stories of the young women, succeeded in offering its students a qualitatively better educational experience than that provided by mainstream schooling.

II: "That was the best part": The whānau support of the Early Childhood Centre

The young women were universally positive about the on-site Early Childhood Centre and its teachers. Their responses to my questions about their experiences of the Centre could be grouped

together under the general theme of holistic and loving whānau-centred support, which acknowledged and affirmed their identities as parents and as young women, and enriched the lives of their children. Kate's response was characteristic of the young women's enthusiasm for the Early Childhood Centre.

That was the best part! You'd go to school, drop the kids off, have a really good chat to someone who absolutely loved your child as much as you did and knowing they would go above and beyond for them; going into the classroom and just being able to see them ... just having them so close, it was just set up so well ...

The following aspects of the Centre's programme and practices were mentioned repeatedly by the young women as things that they valued.

“You could just peek through the window to see if they were ok”: The benefits of having the children on-site

Six of the young women commented on how much they enjoyed and were reassured by having their children on site at the College, while they studied. This proximity to their children meant that they could see them whenever they wanted, and also enabled teachers to come and get parents from the classroom if their child needed breastfeeding or was unsettled. For most of the young women, on-site childcare was a necessary pre-requisite for their attendance at the College. Emma's comment was characteristic of those made by the other young women:

I really liked having the kids right there ... you knew you could just peek through the window to see if they were ok and ... that was good ... if anything happened they'd come and get you so you didn't have to worry ... it made things a lot more easier ... if I was somewhere else, I'd be worried all the time.

Being encouraged to spend a lot of time with their children, especially when they first started at the College, was regarded by the young women as very helpful during the settling in period. Huia talked about how this supported parent and child bonding and didn't undermine her “control” of her own child:

You could still bond with them when you did activities together and if you felt like you weren't bonding enough, you could still stay there all day if you wanted to. You still had

control of your child and could be with your child if you wanted to. That was awesome. No restrictions.

Zena summed up the feelings of the young women in her observation that:

Childcare was awesome! ... if you were nervous about your child, you could just go in there and check on them.

“She was amazing, my son loved her”: Whanāungatanga

The young women valued the loving relationships that the Centre teachers developed with their children, and felt confident that they were safe and well-cared for. This reassurance about their children supported the young women as students in the classroom. Anahera said:

One of the biggest things for me was knowing that the kids were going to be safe, you know, that it's actually good for them being in childcare.

Sam also talked about the close and loving relationships between the teachers and the children:

[The teacher] was amazing, [my son] loved her. She was his favourite, she would cuddle him when she put him to sleep ... she had all the good stories of all the things he'd done that day ... she was great, really good with him.

The young women were universally positive about the benefits of attending the Early Childhood Centre for their children, some of whom were enrolled for three or more years. They talked about their children's positive social development, their friendships with other children at the Centre, their loving interaction with teachers which engendered trust, the learning opportunities which were not available to the children at home, and the familial relationships they experienced with the other mothers at the College. Sam was clear about the benefits of this experience for herself and her child, particularly in the face of social disapproval about putting children into childcare from an early age:

It wasn't like I just left him there, we were there at breaks and at lunch and we took them on outings and things like that. It could have ended up for the worst if I'd been at home with him and not at preschool, where there were all the facilities and the support. It's good

to have that many people around you and your kid – more people to love them ... It was a huge positive having him in Pumanawa.

The young women also talked about the close and supportive relationships that developed between themselves and the early childhood teachers. These authentic, warm and respectful relationships were highly valued by the young women whom I interviewed. Sam said:

[The childcare teachers] actually cared, the way they treated you and talked to you, they were actually concerned and actually did care and wanted to know if you were sick or had had a bad day ... It was a good support and it was good to be able to actually talk to people when they were actually interested in what you were saying, not just faking it ...

The close relationships with the Early Childhood Centre teachers created confidence and trust in the young women, many of whom had never left their children in the care of people other than their own family members. As Anahera said:

The teachers in childcare as well, they had good relationships with everyone here – you know, you knew if there was a problem happening in childcare with your child, you knew it would be taken care of, you knew that you'd be able to discuss it and work that through as well, so just everything here was just so, so supportive and so much encouragement.

The young women also spoke of the support they received with parenting, which was shared in a respectful and non-judgemental way by the childcare teachers. As Emma said:

That was always good cos sometimes you couldn't see what was right in front of your face, if your kid needed something and that was in a nice gentle way, they'd just tell you and you'd go, "Oh!" so that was good.

The accessibility of parenting support was appreciated by all the young women and affirmed their identities as young parents. Jade said:

We knew that if we needed help, we could either chat to other students or we could talk with the childcare teachers or even to the staff members as well, we knew we had support there.

As a young Māori mother, Huia appreciated the culturally responsive practices of the Early Childhood Centre.

Childcare was cool! It was real cool. I remember this woman – I think she was Māori or Samoan, she was training and quite young and she was specialising with [my daughter] and she'd put quite a lot in her book and she put a lot of work into it with paua shell borders and things like that – that was cool. And they'd come and grab me when she was walking and, like lots of pictures of what she did, and she liked it.

These practices acknowledged and supported Huia's and her daughter's cultural identities as Māori, and contributed to their sense of belonging at the Centre.

“Being able to interact with the children and feed them at lunchtime”: Programme structures that supported parenting

As part of the College's daily programme, the young women were required to feed their own children in the Early Childhood Centre at lunchtimes. Five of the young women recalled this practice with affection in our interviews. Lunchtimes provided an opportunity to develop close familial bonds with all the children and to support each other with parenting issues. As Emma said:

You'd see other mothers and they'd be like, “just give me your baby” and everyone was just so helpful with other people's kids.

Several of the women also spoke of the helpful guidance they had received about healthy eating for their children and their appreciation of the ban on ‘junk’ food in the Early Childhood Centre.

The young women also enjoyed their scheduled weekly activities and their regular outings with the children and the Early Childhood Centre staff. Huia stated:

We really loved the music too on Thursday mornings. With the poi and things like that.

The young women valued the opportunities that both they and their children gained from “going back to school”. To conclude, here is Zena's observation about the mutual benefits of attending Pumanawa College and Early Childhood Centre, for both the children and their parents.

It's not only you going back to school and getting an opportunity, it's for your children to develop as well, so if your children aren't getting it, they're kind of missing out.

As already discussed in Chapter Two, the provision of childcare facilities is an essential practical prerequisite for the successful re-engagement of teenage parents in education. The lack of such provision has limited the opportunity to effectively re-engage teenage parents, regardless of government policies and legal requirements, in the United States and Great Britain (Amin, et al., 2006; Hosie, 2002; Lall, 2007; Roxas, 2008; Seitz & Apfel, 1999; SmithBattle, 2006). In New Zealand, Ministry of Education policy requires that Teen Parent Units have their own onsite Early Childhood Centres or have access to a community centre within close proximity of the TPU.

III: “You could make friends really easily”: Relationships with the other young women at the College

Relationships amongst the young women were an important component of their experience as students of Pumanawa College. Although the women I interviewed talked about how hard they had found it to break into the well-established peer group at the College, and how daunted some of them had been by the older students in those early days, they also spoke of the friendships they made and how these contributed to their sense of belonging at the College, as well as to their lives outside the College. They spoke of the positive influence of the prevailing culture of respect and love for the College, which supported, affirmed and normalised their own newly claimed identities as successful learners. They spoke of the commonality of their shared experience as teenage mothers, which supported, affirmed and normalised their own identities as young parents. And they also spoke of outbreaks of conflict and “bitchiness” amongst some of the young women, resulting from daily, long-term, and intense contact at the College. These were aspects of their peer relationships which they had not enjoyed.

Emma’s comment about friendship at the College was representative of all the young women:

I liked a lot of the girls that went there ... you could make friends really easily.

These friendships had a positive effect on the self confidence of those young women who had had some difficulty with peer relationships at their previous high schools. As Jade said:

Hanging out with the girls, that was important because that built my confidence, cos I was really quiet when I first started there and then I made lots of friends.

The young women also spoke of how their shared experiences as mothers enabled them to support each other, and also affirmed and supported their identity and confidence as young parents. As Zena said:

It was nice to have people to talk to who were in the same situation. They were really nice and supportive ... they were young mums themselves and knowing what it was like.

Huia found the support and guidance of her peers particularly helpful in her personal life and relationships.

They were people like me who were going through the same things as me ... and they'd snap you out of things if you were doing things that you weren't supposed to be doing.

This common identity as teenage mothers provided an accepting, affirming and non-judgemental environment at the College, which contrasted with conventional school and wider society. Jade observed:

We all related, we were all on the same level because we all had children or were going to have children, so no-one could judge each other for... what age you are or anything like that, because we were all younger people with children.

The women's common identity and experience as mothers supported the children as well. At the College there were always plenty of 'aunties' to offer cuddles and assistance when needed. Andy's comment that "we were all so proud of each others' children, we just loved them!" was expressed by all the women.

As well as experiencing support in their role as parents, the young women also benefitted from the support of their College peers as learners. Zena talked about the benefits of studying and sitting her Learner Driver Licence, as part of a group.

Just studying it with others, we could test each other, and [the support worker] driving us all out to get the test done, it was supportive, we were all together and encouraging each other, which was good ... we were all working as a team and supporting each other.

Emma also referred to the positive influence on her own achievement of the success-focussed culture amongst the young women.

All the achievements that everyone got, I got a lot of really good ones and so I just kept churning them out.

The young women were influenced by their peers' high regard for the College. Sam observed:

They showed the example of how to respect the school ... "Well, this is amazing, you should be cherishing this!"

This powerful culture of love and respect, so different from the discursive context of conventional schools, acted as a form of unspoken peer control on what was deemed to be unacceptable conduct at the College, such as inappropriate parenting behaviours, or the use of drugs, which had been common practice amongst some of the young women at high school.

One of the challenges arising from studying and interacting together for such long periods, in the close and intense environment of the College community, was the conflict and 'bitchiness' which erupted from time to time amongst some of the young women. When asked about things they hadn't enjoyed about the College, five of the young women talked about this conflict and "cattiness". They identified a number of underlying causes including clashes of personality, conflict over partners, and differing attitudes to study and to parenting, which some found difficult to accept and to resolve in a positive way. Sam talked about "cat fights" that resulted from "people not realising how great the school was and taking it for granted ... it annoyed me so much!"

Jade shared her understanding that conflict resulted from the increasingly young median age of students at the College:

The cattiness and the fighting between the girls ... that wasn't like that when I first started here, and I think that was because there was the more mature girls here as well, and as the age group kept getting younger and younger, you keep getting cattier and cattier ...

Whilst outbreaks of conflict are not unusual in whānau groups, they were antithetical to the endeavours of College staff to develop a positive and loving culture (manaakitanga) amongst the

young women. Because of this, conflict was not accepted as inevitable or unavoidable, and staff and students worked hard to overcome its damaging effects. A variety of collaborative approaches were taken to resolving conflict, including whole group discussions, the modelling of positive methods of conflict resolution, restorative justice practices, and mediation between the parties concerned. Mostly the outcomes were positive but on rare occasions conflict remained unresolved. Andy expressed the opinion of several of the participants that “conflicts were handled tactfully and promptly, in a way that encouraged us to make adult decisions”.

Regardless of these occasional conflicts, the young women strongly identified themselves as students of Pumanawa, and were mostly proud to attend. Kate expressed this sentiment in her comment:

I felt like I was representing a small group of people who were trying to make change in their lives.

IV: Holistic support for the young women as parents, learners and young people

“That helped, having someone to talk to”: The role of Support Workers

During the period of my study, from 2005-2008, a team of two support workers was employed to assist the young women at the College with their diverse and multiple needs. All the participants talked about the value of having support workers on the staff at Pumanawa. They were often the first point of contact for a new referral to the College, and three of the young women mentioned how “lovely” they had found the support workers on that first visit. They were also reassuring in those early days of adjustment to the College, when the young women were feeling apprehensive and uncertain.

Support workers were perceived by both staff and students as an integral part of the College’s attempts to acknowledge and respond to the ‘holistic’ needs of the students. Without this service, a number of students may have been lost to the College because of the overwhelming nature of their personal circumstances. As Andy’s observation suggests, the presence of support workers meant that there was constructive support for the many life challenges or barriers to learning, which the young women brought with them into the College classroom.

For a lot of people there ... I could see it meant the world to them. It probably got them through the day. I couldn’t imagine not having them cos it wouldn’t work. If you had

something going on for you, you couldn't just leave it at the door and come in and do your school work, you just couldn't.

The support workers provided counselling and support for the wide variety of problems which the young women experienced as young women and young parents. They assisted with couples counselling and family work, with the practical and emotional aspects of parenting, and with referrals to a range of other individuals and agencies when required. They were a vital part of the College's grief counselling and support services on occasions of bereavement, such as miscarriage, abortion, pre-natal deaths of babies, an instance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and the deaths by accident of two students.

The support workers also brought a range of services into the College including health, legal advice, housing, and welfare agency support, and co-ordinated visits from a number of specialist counsellors, who offered support with drug and alcohol problems, depression and other mental health issues, parenting concerns, budgeting advice, and so on. They were an important part of the College's careers guidance service, and assisted with the practical components of work placements. They also helped prepare young women for job applications and course enrolments and transported them to appointments, when necessary.

During the period of enrolment of my ten young women participants, one had a miscarriage, two received counselling support for drug addiction and alcohol abuse, three received support with custody and access issues, one was diagnosed with depression, and one was supported to extricate herself and her child from a violent domestic relationship. Each of the young women had access to the ongoing support of the workers whenever they needed it. In order to protect the privacy of the young women, I have chosen not to identify the speakers of the following comments.

One young woman drew on the support workers throughout her time at the College, from her anxious early days of adjustment to the College and to her new role as a parent, and later, when she acknowledged her issues with addiction. Weekly counselling sessions formed part of her overall support plan, and she talked about how this had helped her to manage unresolved problems.

My last year, I used to see [the support worker] once a week and that helped, having someone to talk to. I used to bottle things up, it was good to actually sit down and have a rational conversation with someone, instead of going back to my old habits of pushing things down, going out and getting drunk.

Another young woman talked about the practical, non-judgemental assistance she had received for a sexual health concern.

I was seeing a guy and he texted me and said that he had something, and I went, “Oh, that’s nice!” [laughs] ... and I thought, “Oh, what do I do?” and I just went and told [the support worker] and she said, “Right, we’ll just go and make you an appointment”, so that was fine. That was helpful, yeah, cos at the time I thought, “Oh, how revolting, I could have got something!” but she was like, “It happens”. It wasn’t a big deal, which was good.

One participant described the support she received when the College became aware that she was living in an abusive relationship.

[The van driver] come to pick me up and I answered the door and I think I had a black eye or something and he come and told you. And [the support worker] came and seen me right away ... she’d come to talk to us and see if we were alright and then ... she took me to get a Protection Order... And I remember it was then that I got full custody of my child.

The support workers were kept extremely busy. Their presence supported the young women to bring who they were as young women and as parents, into the College environment, and to receive helpful support and assistance, without fear of judgement.

“They’re there tooting the horn”: The provision of transport

The provision of transport for those students, unable to drive themselves to school, was another part of the comprehensive and holistic response to meeting the needs of the young women and their children. Zena talked about how helpful this had been, not only in getting her to school but in motivating her to attend. The relationship (whānaungatanga) she enjoyed with her drivers was also important.

The transport was good and I think it gets you motivated as well because if you’re not motivated and you’ve slept in, and you just can’t do it, they’re there tooting the horn and

saying, “Get up, come on, do it!” So, yeah, that was good ... I enjoyed talking to them as well ... the relationship I had with them was quite a major thing ... them being so nice ... keeping us safe, making sure we get to school safely and get home safely, it’s a big thing.

“It got them through the day”: The provision of food

Another practical component of the comprehensive and holistic support offered by the College was the provision of healthy food and drinks, which were always available to the young women and their children. This included breakfast and lunch supplies as well as healthy morning teas, and once a week, several of the young women prepared a cooked lunch which was shared by staff and students. For some of the young women who lived in straitened circumstances, this was an essential provision, and most of the young women talked about how much they appreciated the availability of food. Tatiana’s observation about this practical expression of manaakitanga and awhinatanga (support) was representative of the views of the other women.

The food was a bloody good idea as well ... as much as the food didn’t have to be there, a lot of us wouldn’t have shown up if we couldn’t get a free breakfast because we couldn’t have it at home ... a lot of girls came for the food ... it got them through the day!

The sharing of food or kai was also part of the more formal practices at the College, such as providing hospitality (manaakitanga) to invited guests at Prize Giving ceremonies, Open Days, Christmas parties, and so on.

All of these components of the College’s supportive whānau culture, which enabled the young women and their children to attend the College, related not only to their practical needs but also to those less tangible, but just as important, emotional and spiritual needs for support and nurturing. Durie’s (1998) argument that health and well-being (hau ora) is enhanced by meeting a young person’s holistic needs was evident in the young women’s comments about the holistic whānau support provided at the College. For those who had come from deprived or difficult familial circumstances, these nurturing and supportive services were particularly valuable, at a time in their lives when they needed special support as new and vulnerable mothers of young children. As well as enhancing their safety and well being, these services contributed to their sense of self worth as young women, deserving of the support and care of others.

International research into effective initiatives to re-engage teenage parents in education is unequivocal about the value of comprehensive and holistic service provision, within the context of the school setting. This enables young parents to continue their education, whilst being supported with their multiple and particular needs as young parents and young women (Amin, et al., 2006; SmithBattle, 2006).

V: Academic achievements at the College

In this chapter, I have argued that the refashioning of the young women's identities was supported, within the nurturing culture of Pumanawa College, by their exposure to positive narratives about who they could be as young women, as parents and as learners. An important aspect of this process of identity reframing related to the young women's former identities as 'failed' learners or 'school drop-outs' from the conventional schooling system.

Pumanawa College is a government funded school and, at the time of my study, external agencies such as the Education Review Office had evaluated its success primarily by using quantifiable measures of achievement, which are the simplest and most available tools for this purpose. In their Ministry of Education review of Teen Parent Units, Carlisle and Gibbs (2008) acknowledged the limitations of these tools as a measurement of 'success'.

However, as members of a wider social context which places high value on measurable outcomes in fields such as education, the young women were also preoccupied with these outcomes, in the form of credits and certificates, particularly because of their prior experiences of failure in the high school system. As a result, the successful acquisition of these measures of achievement played a powerful transforming role in the reshaping of their sense of self and identity as learners.

With these comments in mind, let us now look at some of the more quantifiable achievements made by the young women whilst attending the College, and consider the impact of these achievements on their sense of self and identity, when they left the College. In the next and final findings chapter of this study, I will also share observations made by the young women about other less tangible gains, resulting from their experiences as students of Pumanawa College.

Jade

Jade, the youngest of my participants, came to the College directly from her local high school

when she learned that she was pregnant. She simply exchanged her school uniform for normal day clothes and appeared at the College the following day. She was fourteen years old and had no school qualifications. She left Pumanawa after three and a half years, with a National Certificate in Mathematics Level One and NCEA Levels One and Two. She had also achieved the English Award, and the Awhina Award for her involvement in the Early Learning Centre, as well as a First Aid Certificate and her Learner and Restricted Driver Licences. Jade talked about her achievements in terms of how these assisted her future work choices:

Getting NCEA Level Two was really big for me, I was so happy when I got it ... because in most courses and stuff like that, I think you need NCEA Level Two ... so that was one of the big things that was going to get me into doing the things that I wanted to do.

Rachel

Rachel had left school with NCEA Level One and was doing a trade apprenticeship when she became pregnant at 18. She was unable to work throughout her pregnancy, and was persuaded by Jade to come to Pumanawa Young Parents College. She left the College after two and a half years with NCEA Level Two and a partially completed tertiary qualification in Business and Management. She had also passed her Full Driver Licence, her First Aid Certificate, and had been awarded an externally funded scholarship to continue her tertiary studies. Her experience of the Young Parents College completely changed her attitude to school and to learning.

Well, before I came here I hated school! I swore I'd never go back ... And then I decided that yes, I would, and I'd get Level Two because I didn't get that at school, and then I'd leave, because that was my view on school – I didn't like it. And then after coming here and being able to do what I wanted ... and then being encouraged to do it, it just helped me change who I am, in the sense that now I don't know where I'm going to be without school.

Anahera

Anahera was unique amongst the participants in having already completed her schooling with NCEA Level Three before attending the Young Parents College. Becoming pregnant during her final year at high school, her baby was born after she completed her exams. She enrolled at Pumanawa as an adult student, when she was nineteen and her son was a year old. Whilst there, she completed the Level Three pre-entry requirements for her chosen degree in the

medical sciences. Anahera also passed her Restricted Driver Licence and received the Sports Award and the Performing Arts Award, as well as a tertiary Scholarship.

Emma

Emma had left high school after two and a half years with no qualifications, because she “didn’t like school and never went”. She attempted several courses and worked part time, becoming pregnant when she was 18 years old. In the three and a half years that she attended the Young Parents College, she achieved her National Certificate in Maths Level One, NCEA Levels One and Two and partially completed her National Certificate in Retail Level Three. She also completed a First Aid Certificate, her Learner and Restricted Driver Licences, and gained the Reading Award for establishing a culture of reading in her home. In response to my question about how she felt about herself when she left, she stated:

Oh good ... I knew what I was going to do and I was looking forward to it ... I don’t have the sort of attitude that I can’t do things anymore. If something comes up and it’s a bit hard, I used to think, “Hah, I can’t do that!” “Well, persevere with things ... just don’t give up on things!” Now that I’ve actually finished something that worked out well, I know what can happen when I finish now.

Sam

Sam had also not enjoyed school, struggling with undiagnosed learning challenges and with what she described as unsympathetic teachers. She left school after two years with six credits at Level One. Becoming pregnant at fifteen, she enrolled in the College when her child was six weeks old. She attended Pumanawa for three years, achieving her National Certificate in Maths Level One, NCEA Levels One and Two, and commencing a tertiary level Diploma, which she went on to complete after leaving the College. Sam also received the Awards for Attendance and Effort, and passed her Learner, Restricted and Full Driver Licences. In response to my question about her sense of self when she left the College, Sam talked about her pride in her achievements, and her clarity about her future goals:

That was good, I was proud of myself cos I’d got through it and I was going to Polytech ... everything was going good ... I felt real good.

Zena

Zena had struggled with literacy and numeracy throughout school, and was stood down at the age of thirteen, before completing her third form year, for repeated truancy and other misdemeanours. She was already pregnant, but this was only confirmed after she had left school. She enrolled in the New Zealand Correspondence School for distance students but “didn’t do much”. Zena enrolled in the Young Parents College at fourteen when her child was four or five months old. She attended the College for over three years, achieving NCEA Level One and fifteen credits at Level Two. She had also gained her Learner and Restricted Driver Licences, her First Aid Certificate, three Certificates of Excellence in the Reading Challenge, and was awarded the local Member of Parliament’s Cup for Outstanding Contribution to the College. She recollected, with some pride, being invited to lunch with the Member of Parliament. “That was a big achievement!” When asked about how she felt about her achievements at the College, she said:

I felt like I could have done a lot more too, like bring work home that I know I can do independently, which was a little, my ‘bad’, but I think the support that I got there and the help from teachers made a difference, cos otherwise, some of the work I would have gone, “Oh my God, what’s this!” ... I’d start working myself up into a state and then I’d think, “Na, I’m just not going to do it!”

Zena’s experience of individualised learning support, from caring teachers at the College, supported her to persevere with her studies and to achieve some academic success.

Huia

I had interviewed Huia to gain a form of counter story of the College, and had been surprised to discover that she also felt positive about her experiences of Pumanawa, particularly as these had helped her to address pressing issues in her personal life. Because Huia had left the College or, from my perspective, had ‘dropped out’ after less than a year, her measurable achievements were comparatively modest, amounting to a few credits at Level Two. I interviewed her only once and, in that interview, did not ask her what her sense of self was like when she left the College. Despite my making several attempts to have a second interview with her, Huia did not respond to my requests.

Kate, Andy and Tatiana

The final perspectives I will share come from the three young women, Kate, Andy and Tatiana. When I asked Kate about her sense of self when she left the College, she also talked about her feelings of confidence and personal success, and her sense that she was “on her way”, with positive aspirations for her future:

I was thinking I was doing good and I was happy and I was on my way. I was definitely feeling confident. That last year of school was really good for me.

Tatiana was also feeling confident when she left the College, because of her clear goals for her future career:

I had plans, I had big plans. I was obviously going to have my own home based business ...

Andy’s comments in the following narrative about her “self-image within the College and ... as a whole” were especially revealing of the fluid nature of our identities, and the effect on these of the varying discursive contexts of our lives. Her comments show just how hard she found it to overcome the limiting and damaging effects on her personal confidence and self belief of familial and schooling contexts. As narrative analyst, Josselson (2011) said, “The self is regarded as multiple, as different voices in dialogue with one another” (p. 227). Andy described how she viewed herself as a valued and confident young woman within the supportive context of the College environment, and how difficult it was to “transfer” this positive self-image into the context of a less supportive and more judgemental social environment, when she left the College. Andy said:

Um (p) I think my self-image right at the time I was leaving was, yeah, (p) I don’t know, you kind of had your self-image within the College and then your self-image as a whole, if you get what I mean? At the College you felt accepted, you felt, um, valued and I was probably quite, well, I was quite confident and quite independent by the end of it, but still in my wider life, I still wasn’t quite there, you know? So it took a while to transfer those things over ...

I will consider the challenges the young women faced in their transition from the College into the wider world, in the following and final findings chapter.

VI: Pumanawa College as a site of transformation of identities

In this chapter, I have drawn upon Māori theories of culturally responsive pedagogies to frame the relational and discursive practices of Pumanawa College and Early Childhood Centre, showing how these practices affirmed the young women in their role as parents, supported them to succeed academically, and nurtured and honoured them as young women with positive futures.

The College supported the reframing of the identities of its young women students by immersing them in a cultural context, which offered different discursive constructs or narratives of the possible identities available to them as young women, as learners and as parents. It did this by challenging and transforming conventional school practices, which had mostly alienated and failed the young women as learners and as young people (te Riele, 2007). In place of the negative and oppressive social discourses about teenage parenthood and educational failure, which had limited and confined the young women's personal confidence and aspirations, it offered hopeful and optimistic narratives about teenage parenthood and educational achievement, which enhanced their confidence and self belief, and their sense of future possibilities. The College achieved this by normalising, affirming and celebrating the status of its students as teenage parents, and by supporting them to succeed academically, within a context where all the students were teenage parents and where academic success was a normal part of the culture of the College. By offering them loving and affirming relationships (whānaungatanga) within a nurturing kaupapa whānau environment, the College transformed the young women's understandings of the empowering possibilities of school, family and community, and supported the reframing of their identities as valued young women. Its holistic responsiveness to the needs of its students enhanced their prospects of success at the College, helping to overcome the barriers which had prevented them from accessing resources and support as young women, as learners and as young parents.

This supportive, consistent and loving whānau-based culture was made more effective because the young women and children were immersed in the College community on a daily basis, often for a period of three or more years. Intense, daily, long term exposure served to normalise this culture for the young women and their children, even though it was, in many cases, very different from the cultural and discursive contexts of their homes, relationships, and of wider

society. This explains their many descriptions of the College as a “second home”, “a home away from home”, and a “safe haven”.

Emma summed up the normalising experience of the safe and supportive culture of the College, in the following statement:

It felt safe, it was so easy, you could go there every day and you'd know that it was always going to be the same ... It was so normal, coming from a life where you never knew, you could get bashed up or something like that ... it was very supportive.

As the stories and comments of the young women have demonstrated, their pride in their identities as young parents, as successful learners, and as valued young women (the mana motuhake aspired to by Māori pedagogies) was supported by the culturally affirming and nurturing kaupapa whānau College culture, and its safe, structured, and consistent learning environment (whakapiringatanga). This bears out the contention of Macfarlane et al. (2008, p. 113) that, “relationships, connectedness, academic engagement, supportive environment, and acknowledgement and recognition of difference are key qualities that make teaching and learning more meaningful for Māori students and indeed for all students”.

The supportive environment at Pumanawa was of particular importance for the young women because they were parents and, in common with all new parents, they needed the enveloping support of a nurturing whānau to enable them to blossom and grow in this new identity, and to experience the whānau ora, or well-being that is provided by all effective models of whānau (Lawson-Te Aho, 2010; Wilson & Huntington, 2006).

In their New Zealand study of the imagined futures of young women attending Teen Parent Units, Patterson et al. (2010) concluded that these Units provide “young mothers with the social context in which they can both assert a positive maternal identity, and imagine futures in which their lives, and those of their children, can turn out well” (p. 17). They achieve this by drawing on the dominant discursive construction that education is the key to a successful life, and by affirming this possibility in the lives of the young women who are their students.

In the following and final findings chapter, I consider how the young women coped with their often difficult transitions into the ‘outside’ world when they left the College. I look at what

they were doing in their lives at the time of my last interviews with them, and consider how they storied their ‘present’ identities as learners and career women, as parents and family members, and as young women, within the discursive context of life outside the College. And I explore whether the College’s role in refashioning their lives and identities has endured the passage of time.

Chapter Seven:

Negotiating the ‘real world’: Young women’s storied identities within the contexts of their ‘present’ lives

In this final findings chapter, I will begin by considering the challenges experienced by the young women when they left the supportive whānau environment of the College, and endeavoured to carry with them into the less supportive contexts of tertiary educational institutions, work places and “real life”, their aspirations, new-found confidence, and positive sense of self as learners, teenage parents and young women. I will share the storied accounts of the present lives and identities of Andy, Kate and Tatiana, constructed from our final interviews, as well as briefer narratives from Emma, Zena and Sam. These will include an account of some of the experiences of each young woman since leaving the College, how she feels about herself and her imagined future, and how she has storied the longer term influences of the College on her life and identities. I will also include a conversation about ‘success’ from my focus group interview with Kate, Emma and Andy. I will finish this chapter by sharing the young women’s reflections on the transforming impact on their lives of their identities as teenage parents.

Like most young New Zealanders, the young women in my study aspire to have independent, successful and secure futures (Patterson, 2011). In analysing their narratives of work, personal and family life, it became apparent that the young women were framing their ‘present’ identities within dominant discourses about what it means to be a successful young woman in New Zealand today. Before attending the College, these narratives of success had not been readily available to most of the young women within their own familial, schooling and social contexts. Whereas their narratives of self had formerly been constrained by the ‘classed’ identity of the school ‘drop-out’ or failed learner, they were now defined by the equally ‘classed’ identity of the school graduate or successful learner. Because of this, the young women were able to construct their lives and identities within the dominant discourse of ‘education as the key to success in life’. Their storied identities were also framed by other dominant discourses such as that of employment, rather than motherhood, as the “primary marker of adulthood and citizenship” (Patterson, 2011, p. 52).

The one counter narrative, with which the young women continued to resist and challenge prevailing normative trajectories of success, was in their positive construction of their identities as young mothers, whose lives had been enriched and enhanced by their experiences of parenting as teenagers.

I: “*It was like leaving home for the first time*”: The challenge of transition from the College to life in the ‘outside world’

The young women spoke about the emotional wrench of leaving their supportive College whānau, and the challenge they experienced in maintaining their positive and confident sense of self and identity, in the less supportive and more judgemental context of the wider world. Their comments indicate how important it is for Teen Parent Schools to manage this transition in a way that assists their students to build upon the personal gains they have made.

Andy’s experience had been particularly difficult because she had left the College when there were few established protocols for supporting students’ transition to the ‘outside world’. The first year after leaving the College was especially hard. Andy felt self-conscious about her identity as a very young mother, when enrolling her son at primary school. Her confidence and self-belief were also challenged when she attempted to continue studying as a distance student, without the support of her College teachers.

It was the first time that I’d kind of been put back in one of those situations where, you know, it really tested ... what I’d developed in myself, I suppose ... Leaving was a huge test of your character and of your strength, in all of those aspects that are supported there: the parenting, the time-management, the social skills, all those things are tested when you leave.

Kate talked about the difficulties of leaving the College because “you don’t have people to fall back on.” In an evocative image of the College whānau environment, she explained, “It was like leaving home for the first time!” She found it hard to manage stress without the support of her regular meetings with the College Support Worker, and her destructive habits of “pushing things down, going out and getting drunk” had quickly resurfaced. It took her some time to learn to apply the coping mechanisms developed at the College, in the less supportive context of the ‘outside world’.

Although Sam regarded leaving as a positive move, she was also sad to farewell her friends and whānau at the College and, like Kate, drew on the metaphor of “home” to describe her sense of loss. In common with other participants, Sam’s biggest challenge was to find early childhood care of a comparable standard to that provided by Pumanawa’s Early Childhood Centre, which she regarded as “the best ... I just wish I could have kept taking [my son] out there”.

Emma described her feelings of apprehension when she left Pumanawa because she felt it hadn’t adequately prepared her for life in ‘the world’.

Things were made just a little bit too easy ... you’d get a lot of support for things out of school, and once I’d left, if something had happened, I’d be, “Oh, well where do I start? I don’t even know what to do!” So it sort of wasn’t like real life ...

Unlike the other women, Zena hadn’t completed her school studies when her early departure from the College was precipitated by her partner being offered employment away from home. As a result, she had been less clear about her future plans than the other young women.

That was really hard because I didn’t want to say goodbye ... I think it took quite a while to accept that I was leaving ... for a while I didn’t know what I was doing after I left.

II: Six young women today: Negotiating prevailing discourses of ‘success’

Regardless of the difficulties experienced in their transition from the College to “real life”, each of the young women storied herself as successful. I was impressed with the personal achievements and sense of self confidence of the young women as young adults, as parents and as women who were “going places”, despite the often challenging and constraining experiences of their earlier lives.

Andy

Of all my participants, Andy had the most difficulty in maintaining her positive sense of self and identity when she left the College whānau, and her old habits of angrily resisting and avoiding learning challenges had quickly re-emerged.

Once I left and was still doing my own studies, I kind of lost it all for a bit because, you know, I didn’t have that person checking in on me every so often, to go, “Where are you at?”

How are you going with it?” ... So I did lose all that for quite a while and just went back to my old procrastinating ... having melt-downs, yelling at Josh because he just didn’t understand! (Laughs) So the first year after leaving was really tough, study-wise ... I said to Josh the other day, um, “The whole time, I didn’t think I’d finish it.”... So many times I would’ve quit if I didn’t have him to be accountable to, and you guys, you know? If I had of quit, it would have been like, “Well, now what?”

Andy had also struggled with her own parenting after leaving the whānau context of the College and Early Childhood Centre. Empowered by her experience of support at the College, she had overcome her embarrassment as a much-younger mother, and had sought out a parenting course, with a friend.

It was, um ... learning how to be proactive and really getting out there and getting the help that you sometimes need.

Andy’s personal confidence was tested by the daunting prospect of seeking employment, and it was only with the cajoling of her husband that she finally applied for work in her chosen field.

Josh really just had to push me into it ... it all happened really quickly, so I didn’t have time to think, “Shit, I’m really freaking out!”

Andy eventually completed her Diploma whilst working full-time. She talked about how lucky she and Josh were to be young, qualified and employed in careers which they love. In a rejection of familial narratives of identity, the couple had married after Andy left the College. Andy explained this decision as motivated partly to provide “a sense of stability” for her children and, in part, because of the normative influence of her friendship group from the College who were “all getting married”.

When I asked what she was doing now, Andy explained that she was still working full-time, and struggling to achieve that elusive balance between the demands of work and family life.

It’s hard (p) like sometimes I really struggle, sometimes (p) - I’m probably going to cry now. It’s just hard and I do love it, but it’s such a long day for my boys and I really

*struggle with that, because I'm tired (p) and if I'm tired, then they must be too, you know?
(Andy begins to cry.) ... It's a juggling act and, yeah (p) but I think I'm doing OK.*

This was the only time Andy had become visibly upset in our interviews. It was apparent that the pressures of meeting the normative social expectations of working full-time, regardless of her parenting role, were taking their toll on Andy and her children. However, when I asked her if she would like her life to be different, she responded by talking about the “personal satisfaction” she gained from her identity as a career woman, which was even more important to her than the financial benefits of working.

I'd love slightly shorter hours but ... I love the sense of personal satisfaction that comes from working ... you see starting working as a financial thing and you think, “Wow, it's going to be wonderful to have an extra income coming into the house”, and that is awesome, of course, but, um, it's more than that ... For me it's such a sense of pride that I'm doing that because ... no-one in my family, well, women, anyway, don't work full-time, they never have, so I'm proud of that ... It's putting all that hard work, studying and actually using it, it's just such a nice feeling, and you feel like a person, aside from the mother and the wife and those things. (P) So I don't think I could ... And I know that as much as the boys, you know, I want them to grow up having a work ethic and valuing education and all those things. So I hope that they're seeing that ... And I mean, people do it, it's what you have to do!

As the first woman and mother in her family to become tertiary qualified, and to work full-time, Andy has rejected her familial narratives of identity, and located herself within the dominant construction of feminine success as an “autonomous, individualised and ambitious young woman”, for whom the role of full-time motherhood is, of itself, no longer a viable identity (Allen & Osgood, 2009; Bullen, et al., 2000). In her final comment that “it's what you have to do”, Andy justifies the “juggling act” required to balance the demands of her tiring and busy life, by drawing on the neo-liberal discourse of the two-income family as the conduit to financial security and independence (Bullen, et al., 2000; Wilson & Huntington, 2006).

At my final interview, Andy and Josh had just purchased their first home and Andy was “really excited but ... scared at the same time”. In a society where first home ownership for young

couples in their twenties has become aspirational rather than normative, this was a considerable achievement. When I suggested that Andy had been ‘upwardly mobile’ from her impoverished beginnings, she acknowledged the tension this had caused in relationships with other family members, particularly her sisters who, as teenage parents in the early 1990s, had not had access to educational support, and were jealous of her income and success.

In Allen and Osgood’s (2009) British research into maternal identities, they described the process of “othering” or dis-identification with their own mothers, as a way that ‘upwardly mobile’ working class young women free themselves to claim their own ‘more successful’ and socially acceptable identities. Andy storied herself as rejecting many familial identities, in addition to those of career and material success. She constructed her mothering identity as “the opposite of Mum really” in her telling of “bedtime stories and kisses and cuddles before bed”. She described her conscious decision to express affection by hugging her mother and sisters, regardless of how uncomfortable this had been. Andy had also overcome her familial reserve about the celebration of personal achievements, through her experience of success within the affirming culture of the College.

So it’s quite nice now to actually say you’re proud of things that you’ve achieved ... It’s really cool to have achievements under your belt and to feel pride because that’s what’s going to keep you going ...

When I asked Andy to tell me in what ways she thought the College had influenced her in the longer term, she talked about its impact on her identity as a capable learner who knew that she could succeed, regardless of her continuing fear of failure. She acknowledged the opportunities offered by the College which had not been available in her familial culture, including its nurturing of her love of learning, an unforeseen outcome for a young woman who had dropped out of school. Whilst Andy acknowledged that she still finds life a struggle, a consistent metaphor in all her narratives, she attributed her confidence, self belief and the courage to “move forward” even if “things turn to custard”, to her empowering experience of support as a student at Pumanawa.

It’s made me more confident, and it’s made me, um, you know, it’s given me opportunities that I never would have had, and through that I’ve realised that, um, that, you know, I can

set goals and I can achieve them and I, through that, I've come to understand my own ways of dealing with things, you know, and I can be in the middle of having a freak out about something and go, "This is too hard, I'm over it!" and know that that's the process that I go through and that, actually, although I think like that for that split second, I will actually get going and come out the other end and do what I need to do. And you know, just that whole learning thing, that I've been thinking about what I would like to study next, and I never thought that I would ... do any study, you know?

Andy also talked about the positive influence of the College culture on her social identity as an accepting and less judgemental young woman.

As a young teenager, you're not very accepting. You're quite judgemental. To be around such a diverse group of people was tough at times but I've learned from that ... You probably quite often talked to us about how to be accepting of other people and all that virtues stuff you used to talk with us about, Jenny !! (Laughs) ... At the time I thought that was a waste of time really ... But it wasn't.

Andy's storied identity as a successful career woman and a mother, who owns her own home and is "making her way in the world", suggests that she has managed to fulfil her childhood fantasy of achieving fame and fortune, within dominant social constructs of success. Andy is no longer the "misfit" of her narratives of childhood and youth. Whilst still challenged by feelings of lack of confidence in new situations, she has learned to "fake it until [she] makes it" so that, in her professional identity, Andy is regarded as confident and competent.

Research Journal entry, April 2012:

I received an unexpected phone call from Andy, whilst writing this piece, having not talked to her for many months. To my delight, she told me that she was negotiating with her employers to reduce her hours so that she would work only during school hours because she wanted to be more available to her children and their extra-curricular needs. When I observed that I had been struck by how hard she and the other young women were working, whilst managing the demands of their parenting roles, she stated that when they became qualified, they felt that they had to forge ahead by working full-time in their chosen careers, regardless of the other circumstances of their lives. This brought to mind the neo-

liberal discursive construct, described by Allen and Osgood (2009, p. 3) as the “I can have everything girl”. It would appear that for Andy, this construct is no longer essential to her sense of self and identity as a successful young woman.

Kate

Benefitting from improved protocols and practices at the College, Kate experienced a more gradual and supported transition to the “real world” than Andy. Kate continued to attend the College one day a week for the following year, whilst studying her pre-entry requirements for her degree. Still living at home with supportive and well-educated parents, Kate remained there for the duration of her tertiary studies.

Kate still visited the College from time to time, taking her son into the Early Childhood Centre to see his former teachers, and seeking occasional meetings with her former support worker when she needed to talk through issues that were troubling her.

Unlike the other young women whom I interviewed for this study, Kate had remained single throughout her time at the College, her relationship with the father of her child having terminated early in her pregnancy. In our first interview, Kate shared with me that she had “met someone” and was considering a relationship, her first attachment in more than seven years.

Kate was completing her final year of training when I commenced the interviews and, at our last meeting, she had graduated and was about to start full-time work. She was quietly proud of her achievements and very excited about beginning her professional career. This was an outstanding achievement for a young woman with dyslexia, for whom conventional schooling had been at best, frustrating and at worst, a personal and educational disaster.

Kate had recently moved into her own rented accommodation with her son, in order to give him time to adjust to their new home before she began full-time work. Her relationship with the young man she had met had become serious, despite her anxieties about introducing a potential father figure into her son’s life. We both commented that the future was looking bright for her.

When I asked Kate in what ways she thought her experience as a student at Pumanawa College had influenced her life in the longer term, she replied, “It’s my favourite place in the world!” She talked about its positive influence on her attitude to herself and others, on her relationships, both

personal and professional, and on her working life. She was grateful that Pumanawa's focus was not just to support the young women as parents but to "improve our lives and our education".

Kate's identity as a failed learner, because of her learning difficulties throughout school, had been positively reframed by her experiences as a student at Pumanawa, and her subsequent academic success at tertiary level. Drawing on the canonical narrative of the moral virtue of hard-work, she expressed pride in her new identity as a capable, hard-working and successful learner.

I think it's shown me that now I know that, if I work hard, I'll succeed, I can put time in and I can get good marks. It has helped a lot ... I'm not running round saying, "I'm going to fail!" I know I'm going to pass! It has given me that understanding that I am a hard worker and I'm quite proud of that myself!

Kate's negative experience of conventional schooling and of drug culture had also affected her social confidence and she had found it difficult to develop trusting friendships. Kate had made a number of friends at the College including her best friend, Sam, and this had improved her social confidence and her acceptance of self.

Also I learned that friendships were not just based on what people could do for you to get wasted. They were friends just for who they were. That was good.

Kate's family relationships had also improved as a result of her becoming a teenage parent, and attending the College. Unlike Andy, whose tertiary qualifications had been a rejection of familial narratives of self and identity, Kate's academic achievements were a fulfilment of her familial aspirations and identity.

It was almost like I joined my family again, cos I hadn't been around for so long. It was really good.

As a Pākehā young woman (of European descent), Kate felt that she had become more inclusive in her response to people of different ethnicities, particularly with regard to bi-cultural issues, because of her experience of cultural enrichment at the College.

It was very inclusive ... I think that's why, now, I'm inclusive myself and don't mind learning about the Māori culture cos I find it interesting ... and just having respect and stuff. We had the [official blessing and opening of Pumanawa by the local kaumatua] and it was good to have that experience ... I think it was good that whenever we did do anything cultural, the Māori students were right there and leading us. That was really important. I liked that. We'd say, "I can't do it!" and they'd help and that was good as well.

Like Andy, Kate also mentioned the emphasis at the College on the development of personal virtues. Upon reflection, she felt that these had had an aspirational effect on her thinking and efforts to become "a better person".

I loved the virtues, (laughs) yeah, yeah, they were cool! Sometimes I didn't want to do it but I learned a lot from them (laughs) ... like, "Oh yeah, I actually really do need to put this into practice". And now that I've left, I still think about that, and I've still got my "Cleanliness" one in my very messy room. I read it and, um, yeah, they do make you think about things and just having that to aspire to being more of a (p) better person.

When I asked Kate about her work, she talked about how much she has learned about herself and her strengths in her new identity as a professional woman. Whilst still describing herself as "an anxious person", she is able to rationalise her moments of self doubt as being characteristic of all workers who are new to their job. She has also learned that her quiet temperament is well suited to her professional role, and is appreciated by her colleagues and clients. This has helped her to accept and value this aspect of herself.

I do sometimes worry that someone's going to kind of come over to me and say, "You don't know what you're doing," (laughs) but I think everyone worries about that sometimes. I love [my work]! And it's strange cos I'm still an anxious person and I still don't like meeting new people when I'm out socialising but when I do [my work], um, all of the people I've worked with say, "It's just so nice to have someone quiet and calm and you make me feel really safe," and I've never had someone tell me that.

Kate explained some of the strategies she had used as a tertiary student to manage her learning difficulties. She was now able to assess her own strengths and challenges within the context of

her study and work environment, without feeling overwhelmed by her former belief that she was a failure as a learner, and that nothing she could ever do would be good enough to please her teachers.

I take longer to do my work, and get help with proofreading by Mum and Dad over several weeks ... Words are everywhere, in posters and pamphlets. This helps me with my record keeping. My reading now is quite good, and my comprehension. Just spelling is still a problem. The other thing that helps me is that my recall memory is really good ... I can recall the whole day if things need to be checked up on.

I asked Kate how she felt about herself, in light of her childhood and adolescent stories of school failure, difficult relationships and substance abuse. Kate responded by describing herself as “happy”, as a “patient, understanding, and interested” parent, and an “accepting, and funny [friend]. I make people laugh a lot so I think I’m pretty funny”. Each of these identities had been positively reframed by Kate’s experiences as a student at Pumanawa, and she was confident about who she had become.

I feel good about how I am today – I’ve changed a lot but in a good way. I’m quite happy with my achievements. It’s good to have hard work rewarded and to be on the right track.

I finished my third interview with Kate by asking about her plans for the future, and what she imagined she would be doing in five years’ time. Kate was feeling quite positive and confident about her future.

I would like to be working in [rural locations in New Zealand]. Adam will be 11. I’ll probably still be renting but it would be nice to buy a house. It would be cool to have a man in my life and have another child ... I feel excited about my future! It doesn’t look so hard any more. Just thinking about how hard I thought it would be when I got pregnant – now it feels like fun. Some parts will be hard but it seems more manageable now.

Kate’s storied self contests the negative discursive construction of teenage parenthood as “incompatible with academic success, ambition and a professional career ... the markers of contemporary idealised femininity” (Allen & Osgood, 2009, p. 3). Like the imagined futures of her non-parenting peers who had completed high school, Kate draws upon the dominant

narrative of a “happy, stable and contented life”, with a partner, two children and her own home (Patterson, et al., 2010). However, the realities of her experience of early parenting have tempered Kate’s future aspirations with a “cautious optimism” not found in the less-reserved, and perhaps less realistic, confidence of her non-parenting peers.

Tatiana

For Tatiana, leaving the College, which “was so like a big part of my life”, was an emotional wrench, especially as several of her friends were still enrolled there. Over the next year or two, she continued to drop into the College with her daughter to visit teachers and friends and, in particular, the Early Childhood Centre, which was “her grounding place”. Tatiana had left the College with clearly defined career goals. Because her “big plans” involved setting up her own home-based business, she needed to find more suitable accommodation, and this had taken longer than anticipated. Tatiana’s natural impatience had been tested by these delays.

When I visited to invite her to participate in my study, Tatiana’s business was well-established and bringing in a steady, if modest, income. She was also fulfilling her identity claim as a “hard worker”, by working in a second job in the weekends in order to bring more income into the home. Tatiana proudly informed me that she and her long term partner, Mike, were expecting their second, planned child. Mike was completing his apprenticeship at the time and, like Tatiana, had a demanding work schedule.

When I asked if she felt proud of her achievements, given her difficult childhood experiences, Tatiana’s humble response was unique amongst my participants.

Um, yes and no. I’m not that sort of person like, everything I do, I do for Maia, so I feel I know that she’ll be OK and that makes me feel good. So I guess, like that, I feel proud, but I’m not that sort of person to sort of think, like, “You should be really proud,” so I did it for her, it’s all for her and this one and the next two...

Tatiana had consciously rejected her familial narratives of identity, in her endeavours to be a better and more responsible mother than her own mother had been. Acknowledging the role of Pumanawa College and Early Childhood Centre in supporting her identity as a good mother, she felt she was “a better parent” because of this. It was my observation, informed by Tatiana’s stories of self, that her determination to be a ‘good’ mother, and her earlier experiences of

‘parenting’ her own younger brother whilst trying to manage a disintegrating household when her mother committed suicide, had greatly contributed to her excellent parenting skills.

When I asked Tatiana if she was concerned that she might be like her mother, she had said:

Yes, I do worry, but I know I’m OK. But for me, I know I’ll never do the things that she did, like with Maia ... But yeah, I just worry cos it’s in me ... I drunk a lot of alcohol ... even though I’m so young, which is bad, considering I’ve been drinking since I was 12, heavily ... but I don’t now cos Mike and I decided that we drank too much ... I’ve only twice been that annihilated ... Even though I got pregnant, in December ... I hadn’t drunk in that time, which was good. And the same with Maia, which was good. And I won’t drink again until after baby’s a few months old ... and that’s where I think I’ll be OK, because it doesn’t worry me at all when I don’t drink.

In this uneasy dialogue between her multivocal and disjunctive selves (Josselson, 2011), Tatiana reveals her conflicted feelings about her ability to negotiate her maternal identity and control the influence of alcohol in her life. The narrative begins with her acknowledgement, “Yes I do worry ...” because of her history of alcohol abuse from an early age, and ends with, “it doesn’t worry me”, because of her belief that, unlike her mother, she is not addicted to alcohol. Tatiana’s hopeful self has the final word. This is congruent with her other powerfully agentic stories of conscious resistance to familial narratives of addiction, loss of self control, and inadequate and irresponsible parenting.

When I asked Tatiana how she felt her experience as a student at Pumanawa Young Parents College had influenced other aspects of her life, it was in her identity as a learner and a career woman that she felt its influence most keenly. Because she had chosen to attend Pumanawa for the benefit of her daughter, Tatiana had been able to positively reframe her former identity as a resistant student, who had felt she had no control or choice in her learning experiences.

Tatiana had also been supported in the reframing of her identity as a career woman who was “going somewhere”, like her partner.

I wouldn’t have my own business, that’s for sure, and I wouldn’t be on a career path ... If I was lucky I might have been in [an unqualified position] or something, doing a couple of hours a

week but I doubt I'd be doing anything really. I'd just be doing what I was doing which was nothing. I mean I was working, I always worked. I'm a firm believer in working ... but yeah, I'd still be doing long hours for nothing in a crappy job that I don't really like that much ... I mean Mike would have been going somewhere but I wouldn't. Maybe in another 5 years' time I might have decided, "Yeah, I've got to do something", but ... it was so much easier to do it through Pumanawa than it would have been to - there was so much support, rather than trying to do it on my own.

This narrative reveals the importance to Tatiana of her storied identity as a “hard worker”, and her need for this to be acknowledged by others, in this case, myself as audience to her narrative. Drawing on the canonical narrative of the value of hard work, this identity was storied repeatedly throughout Tatiana’s accounts, and appeared to be strongly associated with her sense of self as a worthwhile young woman.

In this narrative, Tatiana expressed her pride in her partner, Mike, who is “going somewhere” in his life. In another response not included here, Tatiana had described Mike as a “good gene pool” because of his successful school record, his ability to work hard and become qualified, and his responsible approach to his role as a father. In all of these ways, Mike represented dominant social constructs of success within normative “tracks to adulthood” (Patterson, 2011) which, while different from her own familial narratives, were highly valued and aspirational for Tatiana.

As with all of the young women at the College, friendships were very important to Tatiana. Her social identity had been reframed by her experience of the accepting, friendly and diverse peer group at the College, and she felt that she had learned to be less “picky” and more inclusive in her choice of friends.

I found different groups of friends too ... Like before ... we all did the same things, we all looked similar and we were similar people, whereas this [Pumanawa] group - not one of us is really similar to any other.

When I asked Tatiana about her plans, she imagined a future with clearly defined personal and career goals, the timing of which would be determined by the family’s financial security, a matter of great concern to Tatiana.

I still want to go back to studying but my partner is doing an apprenticeship, which he should be out of his bond next year, so then I'll look at me going back, probably not next year but the year after. But I'll have a baby and my first child'll be over 3, so she can go into Kindy (free early childhood care and education) so I can study part time. But I'll still have baby to put in childcare as well. But we'll see (laughs) ... Otherwise I do want to, like in my 10 year plan, me and Mike want to buy a house or at least start to buy a house and I want 4 kids ... And Mike eventually wants to become registered, which is good money. And eventually after I do my Diploma and my Bachelor, I want to go back to Pumanawa Young Parents College ... my dream job.

These goals indicate the transformation of Tatiana's identity from that of a school drop-out to a capable learner, whose imagined future now includes tertiary qualifications. As with all the young women, she draws on the dominant cultural narrative of "a happy, stable and contented family", which includes the aspiration of home ownership and clearly defined career goals, as aspects of a successful future life (Patterson, et al., 2010). It is only in her aspiration to have four children that Tatiana ventures outside the dominant cultural norm of the two-child family.

Emma

In Emma's final year at the College, she had undertaken weekly work experience with a local retailer. Upon leaving the College, Emma attended a tertiary institution for one year, gaining a certificate in her specialised branch of retail. Emma had married the father of her second child and, when I met up with her for our interviews, the couple was living with their two children in a rented home. Both were employed, Dylan, full-time as a qualified tradesman, and Emma, for twenty eight hours a week in her specialist field. As she said, "I hate it when people complain about work. I just like going to work."

As with all the young women, Emma (and Dylan) had clearly defined goals for their future, which drew upon the dominant discursive constructions of success involving home ownership, self-employment and, in this case, the New Zealand practice of buying and 'doing-up' houses for resale at a profit. Where Emma differed from the other young women was in her valuing of her maternal identity as a traditional "stay-at-home Mum". Emma appeared to be able to negotiate what to me seemed conflicting identity claims: the traditional maternal and the career woman, who worked in paid employment for twenty eight hours a week.

Married life is good, it's so much fun. We're both very traditional, I like to be a stay-at-home Mum and I work part time and I like to be at home the rest of the time ... And we've got a plan that we're going to do in a few years, cos Dylan wants his own business... and we thought we'd buy a 2 bedroom house and do it up and we'll just keep doing that and eventually, one day, we'll build a house; and we're going to build a wee sleep-out, out the back and I'm going to start a wee online business, just on the phone – there's not going to be a lot of costs ... and it's not going to be a big money maker but I'll be doing what I want to do, and I can do it at home. I don't want to be working for someone else, the whole of my life and I want to be a stay-at-home Mum, and I've talked a lot to people who've started their own businesses and they've said, "Oh, that's a brilliant idea!"

Emma's longer term aspirations of working for herself, in a home-based business, were her way of harmonising these apparently conflicting identities. Her description of the "wee online business [that's] not going to be a big money-maker ... [but is] a brilliant idea" conforms to the findings of Patterson et al. (2010) about the more modest and more realistic 'imagined futures' of New Zealand teenage parents.

When I asked Emma in what ways she felt that her experience at the College had influenced her life, she described how it had increased her personal confidence. Had she not attended the College, she felt she "wouldn't be doing much", and attributed her employment in her chosen career to the encouragement and practical support she had received at the College. Emma was positive about her life direction, and her achievements.

Having my child, I would have settled down a bit, but I wouldn't have been doing much ... I'm a lot more successful than I would have thought I'd be ...

Emma's experience of having successfully completed her studies, both at the College and subsequently, had reframed her identity and self belief as a capable learner, who knew she could achieve her goals if she persevered.

Now I realise that I can do it.

At our final interview, Emma storied herself as happy with her life because she and her husband had plans and were confident of achieving these.

We may not have everything that we want now but I can see that we're going to ... We're saving and ... we have plans and goals.

Zena

When Zena left Pumanawa College, she had travelled with her son and his father, Simon, securing employment as a language teacher. Upon her return home, she decided to train and work as a literacy tutor, before taking up employment in the hospitality industry. I was full of admiration for this young woman, who had experienced significant learning challenges throughout her unrewarding and difficult school years. Like Emma, Zena was not an 'academic' student, preferring practical, hands-on learning experiences such as cooking and gardening, at the College. Because of this, I was surprised (and impressed) by her initial employment choices of teaching roles.

My interviews with Zena took place in the home in which she had lived with her son, her partner and his mother, since she had enrolled at the College at fifteen. She and Simon were doing up their little cottage before buying it from his mother. I was struck by the high standard of their work on the house and the garden, and remembered Zena's enthusiasm for gardening. The couple shared with Emma and Dylan the cultural aspiration of buying, 'doing up' and selling houses and, if this house was any indication, I anticipated that they would be successful in their endeavours.

Zena was undertaking management training in her current employment, at the time of our interviews. She commented, "I'm excited cos it's a new challenge and I like doing new, challenging things." Simon was a self-employed tradesman, and Zena told me, with some pride, that he was very successful and "earned good money". Both young people framed their identities within dominant discursive constructs of success, defined by financial independence and security (Patterson, 2011).

On re-reading my interviews with Zena, I noticed how often she had spoken about "being relaxed". For her, this had been a positive attribute of Pumanawa's culture and, unlike the other young women, it was also amongst her goals for her future. This made me reflect on how hard she had had to work from an early age, assuming the burden of responsibility for her parental family, including her mother's two children from a subsequent marriage, whilst becoming a

mother herself at fifteen. Zena had continued to work part time whilst attending the College as a full time student and mother. She described, with some pleasure, how travelling had temporarily relieved her of responsibility for her parental family. As with most of the young women, the canonical narrative of hard work was part of Zena's identity claim, but not one which she particularly valued.

I asked Zena about her hopes and aspirations, which she explained were constrained by the couple's financial circumstances. She still wanted to undertake further tertiary training, and would like to investigate the possibilities of opening her own café after she and Simon had bought their home.

I'm a bit scared of doing my own business at the moment. I'd have to do more study and ... it's a bit hard cos of finances and stuff ... I'm thinking of night classes but I don't want to run myself ragged either, so I might just have to do part time study.

When I asked Zena what she thought she would be doing in five years time, she was more hopeful. Her plans included her wish to have another child, in conformity with New Zealand's conventional two-child family, the goal of self-employment, and her recurring theme of the desire to be relaxed, away from the ongoing demands of her busy and responsible life.

Go on a long holiday! I do want to get some more property for rentals ... I think we'll be relaxed, hopefully I will have done some study by then into location and business ... Simon seems to think we'll have 5 children ... I do want one more child ... and Pete definitely wants a little brother or sister.

Although only in their early twenties, Zena and Simon had already fulfilled many of the goals such as home ownership, travel, self-employment and child-bearing, that their non-parenting peers imagined within a much longer time frame (Patterson, et al., 2010). This would appear to explain why some of Zena's future goals and aspirations conformed with those normally located in an older age group, such as taking long holidays.

Zena had been away from the College for a number of years when I interviewed her. She was definitive about the longer term influence of the College on her life and identity, talking about her increased personal confidence and social skills, the support she had received as a parent,

the long term friendships she had made, the opportunities that the College had opened up for her, and her understanding of the importance of education.

I became more of a confident outspoken person ... I enjoy talking to strangers!! .. Before I'd be just too shy, I couldn't look at anyone or interact with them but now I deal with 400 customers a day!! ... Pumanawa helped with those social skills - trying to get to know all the teachers and all the students, yes, you become more and more relaxed and not so scared, yeah, that helped me ... I never thought I'd be working with people, I thought I'd be hiding away in some office somewhere.

Like the other young women I interviewed, Zena felt that the College had supported her to become less selfish and more tolerant of others.

I've become more understanding and considerate to other people and what they've been through ... When I was young, I was so selfish!

The guidance with parenting, provided at the College, had also supported Zena to reject her familial parenting models, which she had described as chaotic, conflictual and negligent. Zena was demonstrably responsible in her own parenting. Having learned to value education from her College experience, and accepting the dominant discourse about educational achievement as the key to success, she told me about making homework sheets “off the internet”, when her son attended a new primary school and didn't get homework. She was hopeful that Pete's school experiences would be more positive than her own.

I've got a little bit of knowledge, and education is really important to me ... I'm hoping Pete's going to stay in school no matter what happens ... I'd really like him to keep thinking that school is a positive thing ... I never got a chance to like it, so it was always negative ...

Zena recounted how the College had encouraged her to overcome her own lack of confidence with literacy, by reading to her son. This had supported her to establish a culture of reading in her home, a practice that had been absent in her own familial environment.

And I know he enjoyed it and I enjoyed it and we've sort of continued, and now he brings chapter books home and it will be like, “Oh, we'll read this” ... that's something that we

do together ... Yes, yes, I'm reading more myself, yeah ... me and [a friend from Pumanawa] actually made a library day, for ourselves with the boys ... Pete's ... reading pretty well.

When I asked Zena how she feels about herself today, she expressed satisfaction with her life.

When I stop to think about things I think, yeah, that's good. I'm glad that things are working out the way that I'd like them to.

Sam

After Sam left the College, she attended a tertiary institution for two years and, at the time of our interviews, was working full-time in her chosen career. Sam's mother had provided a familial identity as "a successful career woman", and Sam was doing her best to fulfil this identity in her own life. With ongoing mentoring support from one of her teachers at Pumanawa, Sam had managed to work through the constraints of her learning challenges, and had almost completed her two year Diploma when her father committed suicide. Sam talked of the regret she felt about her estrangement from her difficult and multiply-addicted father, before his death. Sam was well-supported by her mother and step-father, in all aspects of her life. Her mother was extremely proud of Sam's achievements, saying that she should be "a poster girl" for the College.

Sam had recently secured herself an excellent full-time position in a local company and was really enjoying her work.

It's good, it's interesting and it keeps you occupied.

The identity of parenthood had acted as a strong motivator for Sam, who accepted the prevailing discourse of personal responsibility with regard to her son's upkeep, and the need for a career with a sound income. Sam had enrolled at Pumanawa in part to achieve this goal. Her preoccupation with material ambitions had been enhanced by her own familial experience of austerity resulting from her father's addiction to gambling, which had left her mother with a burden of debt.

Sam had ended a long-term relationship, some months before our first interview, and had commenced a new relationship with a young man who was also a parent. She was currently encouraging him to take up an apprenticeship and become qualified like herself. This reflects her

aspirations for success, which were framed within dominant discourses of educational success, personal security and independence. The couple had moved into a large rented home, in order to comfortably house their reconstituted family.

When I asked Sam about the influence of Pumanawa on her life, she talked about its positive long term impact on her identities as a mother, as a learner, and as a young woman. For Sam, attendance at Pumanawa Young Parents College had not only enabled her to achieve academically, but had also benefitted her child socially and educationally. Sam was the only one of my participants to clearly articulate her belief that, as an isolated and apprehensive sixteen year old new mother, she and her child had been safer in the College environment than they may have been at home without support. Sam attributed many of her present parenting practices including sleeping routines, healthy eating habits, and positive discipline, to her learning at the College, and was grateful for the opportunities and support she had received.

Cos I was there at 16 until I was 18, I suppose it influenced me in every way really, cos you kind of grow with it. The way you think about things, the way you see things, the way you see yourself, the way you see learning, which I didn't much like to start ... it kind of changed your life ... I would always respect the school no matter what, it was an amazing thing and you were so grateful that you could be there. The respect was for the school and everyone who did all the amazing things for you.

When I asked Sam how she felt about herself today, she expressed satisfaction with her life, and with her identities as a successful young woman and mother of a “well behaved” child.

I'm happy with it. I like who I am today and what I've achieved, it's good and I've got Nathan, who's generally really good and everyone says he is gorgeous.

Jade, Rachel and Anahera

At the time of my focus group interview with Jade, Anahera and Rachel, Jade had been working in the personal appearance industry and was considering undertaking further training when she was diagnosed with a chronic illness which forced her to stop work. Apart from Huia, Jade was the only one of my participants who was no longer following the conventional “track to adulthood” of employment (Patterson, 2011). Rachel was a full-time student, completing her

second Diploma in preparation for full time employment, and Anahera was also completing her degree full-time, with a clearly identified career outcome.

During my focus group interview, organised to check the themes emerging from my individual interviews with Andy, Kate, Tatiana, Emma, Zena and Sam, these young women reiterated the comments of the other participants when I asked them how they felt the College had influenced their lives. They talked about the warmth and supportiveness of the whānau culture, about the impact of the College on their personal confidence, and how it had supported and increased their academic success and their motivation for learning. They talked about the benefits of being supported to become good parents and, in particular, the focus on reading which had encouraged them to establish the habit of reading to their children, which they felt had improved their children's literacy skills.

Jade talked about the negative impact of prevailing judgemental discourse about teenage parents, which had been positively reframed by the hopeful philosophy, propounded at the College, about the benefits of re-engagement in education:

When you do get pregnant, you have that judgemental view of yourself. Like, you know how everyone judges young parents, you think, "Oh my God, I'm going to be like one of them!" And then, coming here, you saying, "You can continue your education, it's good for your child!" And you feel more comfortable about yourself.

When I observed how impressed I had been with the parenting practices of all of the young mothers I had interviewed, Jade responded:

And that's coming from here, and from ourselves. Like, we choose who we want to be, in the end. But coming from here, and all the learning, like role modelling, from other parents that are here, that helps as well.

Jade attributed the young women's success as caring and responsible young mothers not only to the supportive whānau environment of the College but to personal choice and autonomy, which the College had encouraged in the young women. This discursive construct of personal success was framed within dominant neo-liberal constructs of autonomous, individual choice and responsibility (Allen & Osgood, 2009; Bullen, et al., 2000). In Patterson et al's. (2010)

New Zealand study of young people's imagined futures, she concluded that schools are an important vector for transmitting "liberal ideologies that privilege human subjectivities of personal autonomy" (p. 18), and the College had actively encouraged its students to believe that they were capable of making constructive choices for themselves and their children. The following conversation between Andy, Kate and Emma further developed this theme of "personal responsibility for making the most of their lives" (Patterson, et al., 2010, p. 18).

"You gave us a good start to build on for ourselves": Success and the agentic self

In my second focus group interview, the young women also storied their identities as successful in strongly agentic and autonomous terms. When I said that I regarded them all as "really successful in all sorts of ways" in their lives, and asked them to talk about what it was that they thought had contributed to their success, Emma responded:

I think we all got given a good start. Like going back to school and being able to – you gave us a good start to build on for ourselves.

Andy countered this with the observation that not all students had thrived at the College.

Within school, there were still people that didn't thrive in that environment, so I think that ... whether you realise it or not ... some part of you knows that you need to do something, something's got to change and you've got to open up.

Emma:

You have to want to do it.

Kate:

Yeah, like ... you had that want to do something, and then, going to school made it clear, and then you had that support as well, yeah.

This conversation led on to their discussion about "flipping the bird" or contesting the negative stereotypes about teenage parents, already discussed in Chapter Six. We talked about the connection between a sense of hope and success in life, and the young women felt that the concept of "hope" was too "airy fairy" and not sufficiently agentic.

Andy observed:

I think the word 'hope' in itself doesn't give enough credit to sheer determination and guts and effort! ... I think for me and my journey, and probably for you guys, too, it was almost like it was more self-directed than that.

The young women then discussed what they felt they had gained from their experience at the College.

Emma said:

Some pride.

Kate:

Yeah, strength.

And Andy said:

Mmm, because by that point you'd learned that whatever you wanted to do, you had to put the effort in.

Kate:

And at the College, we didn't go, "Oh, I'm young and I've got children and it's hard!" ... We did make our own beds and we were going to lie in them and we were going to do a jolly good job of it, at the same time ... Having pride in yourself is important.

I was intrigued by this conversation, which took a rather different turn from that of my individual interviews with each of the young women, as can happen in focus group conversations (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). In this interview, whilst acknowledging the "good start" they had received at the College, the young women emphasised the importance of the autonomous and agentic self who is responsible for her own personal success in life.

The young women were simultaneously resisting and embracing powerful social narratives about teenage parents, in this conversation. Drawing on the cultural narrative of "self-made" success and its emphasis on personal responsibility, they storied themselves as different from other "less

successful” young parents because of their personal attributes of drive, hard work, pride and strength. Kate’s cautionary metaphor about making one’s own bed and having to lie in it has been subverted into a triumphant story of the personal will to succeed, despite the odds.

Empowered by their experience of academic and personal affirmation and success at Pumanawa College, these young women had mostly rejected the constraining identities of their childhoods, and located themselves within dominant cultural constructs of success. Drawing on these constructs, they storied themselves as competent and successful learners, as hard-working young women with clearly defined career paths, and as good and loving mothers, who were providing a positive and responsible role model to their children. They were striving to achieve the normative indicators of acceptable, autonomous adulthood by becoming financially independent and self sufficient. None of them conformed to the prevailing discursive construction of teenage parents as welfare dependent ‘dole-bludgers’. As Zachry (2005) had found in her American study of teenage parents attending an alternative school, these young mothers viewed welfare support as a temporary step in their path to financial independence.

At the time of my final interviews, three of the young women had graduated and were working full-time in their chosen careers, two were still studying full-time towards their tertiary qualifications, three had completed tertiary level certificates and were employed for at least twenty five hours per week, and two were full-time home based mothers, one by necessity because of health problems, and the other, by choice as a mother of three pre-school children who were attending kohanga reo (a Māori-immersion early childhood programme).

On a personal level, I felt concerned that the young women were mostly working (extremely) hard in their efforts to achieve the “markers of contemporary idealised femininity” in their identities as academically successful, ambitious and career-focussed young women (Allen & Osgood, 2009, p. 3), regardless of their identities as parents. Nevertheless, it was evident that almost all were following clearly defined and normatively successful “tracks to adulthood”, in their tertiary educational qualifications and employment. Unlike the young mothers of Patterson’s study (2011) and of most quantitative research, the young women in my study had successfully re-engaged in education. This experience had supported them to defy what Patterson described as the “yo-yo pattern” of sporadic employment and deferred personal goals, by locating themselves within the discourse of employment as ‘career’ rather than simply as ‘work

for pay'. Whilst the College had not propounded the discourse of full-time career as the "primary marker" of success - the staff members who were mothers of young children had all chosen to work part time at the College – it had encouraged its students to believe that they had choices. As Patterson (2011) stated, "the choices young people make are socially situated, and reflect the resources [they] can draw upon". The young women's experience of personal and educational success at the College constituted many of these resources. In addition, their experience of early childhood care for their children, at the College, had normalised their future use of pre- and after-school care whilst they worked and studied.

It was my observation that, rather than having their opportunities for further education and career curtailed by early parenting, these young women, who were now in their early to mid-twenties, were mostly managing to keep pace with (and in some cases outstrip) their non-parenting female peers. When this latter group would be required to temporarily interrupt their employment in their late twenties and early thirties, in order to have their first babies, the young parents of my study would already have children in high school.

III: "*There are many bonuses*": The young women's positive construction of their identities as teenage parents

I will conclude this chapter by sharing what the young women had to say about the effect on their lives of their identities as young parents. All of the young women regarded becoming a parent as having positively transformed their lives, their opportunities, and their plans for the future. They felt they had "grown up" quickly because of the responsibilities inherent in their new roles and identities, and had left behind previous "dead-end" behaviours, some of which their peers were still engaged in such as excessive alcohol and drug use. Parenthood had provided "an incentive to do well ... a catalyst for personal development and growth, and enhanced coping abilities" (Wylie, 2009, p. 20). Each young woman was intent upon fulfilling the culturally normative identity of the 'good mother', who loves and cares for her children, takes responsibility for their support through paid employment, and is a model of educational and personal success, regardless of her age. As Wilson and Huntington (2006, p. 64) had found in their New Zealand study, teenage parents "see themselves as making a success of their lives". This finding is supported by Wylie's (2009) and Collins' (2010) New Zealand qualitative studies of teenage parents.

I will finish Andy's story by including her observations about the longer term consequences of the "turning point" experience of becoming a teenage parent at seventeen. For Andy, this had unequivocally been a positive experience, regardless of the prevailing negative discourse about the 'problem' of teenage parenthood. Providing Andy with "good opportunities", it had effectively changed the direction of her life and identity.

It's been positive ... people who don't know, you know, most people don't see how that could be possible but you know it has been, it's been a struggle but nothing bad's come of it, only good opportunities have come from it, yeah, so I - you know, when Gabe was 2 or 3 I'd sit there and think, "What would I have been doing as an 18 – 19 year old, what would I be doing now if I hadn't had him?" you know ?

I asked Andy what she thought she would have been doing.

I think I would have been a complete write off, I really would've been, because of the people that I knew and the things I did, you know...

I will conclude Kate's story by sharing her observations about the effects of becoming a teenage parent at seventeen. For Kate, this had had many "bonuses" and she had no regrets about this identity. She felt that teenage parents have advantages over older parents, and are less anxious and more accepting of their children. Her response to her colleagues' concerns about Adam's learning challenges reveals her personal confidence and assuredness in her identity as a good mother.

Ah no, there are many bonuses. You still appreciate things. I still remember what it's like to play in a paddling pool, I love it and Adam loves it. You can still relate back to your childhood, the memories are still there. It's great, we have fun together. My experience with older parents is I tend not to worry so much. They're so obsessed with pushing their children through things to try and get to the finish. I'm just happy if Adam's improving. I think, "That's fine, let's have fun!" rather than what reading group he's in, etc. Adam has [learning challenges] – that's been huge! I think being young has helped me just kind of go, "Oh, OK, that's just who he is!" Other people I know through [my work] ask, "Don't you worry about him not fitting in?" Why does he have to fit in? He's just Adam and that's

alright with me. That's been good ... I think teenage parents are just so proud of their children.

When I asked Kate, in our last interview, if there was anything that we hadn't talked about, she had a final comment to make about her strong rejection of the prevailing negative discourse about teenage parenthood. Like Andy's, her narrative concluded with the acknowledgement that becoming a teenage parent had been a transforming experience, which had positively impacted upon her life.

I think the only thing I really didn't mention is that I think it's still seen as being so awful to have a child so young ... I'd say most people think that, and even though I've done what I've done with Adam, I'd still say my family and my friends would say, "It's such a shame! But she's done so well, despite the tragedy!" I often get asked to talk to young women, and it's going to get scared into them [not to get pregnant], and I'm like, "Well, I'm not really going to do that" cos I'm going to tell them that I had a wonderful time, and I don't really regret anything, and I'm quite happy. And then I'm not allowed to talk to them (laughs) ... At the end of the day, I don't walk around feeling so sad about my life ... I think what I've done is a lot better than what I would have done if I didn't have Adam! I think that would have been a tragedy!

I will conclude Tatiana's story by sharing her perspective on how teenage parenthood has affected her life opportunities and identity. For Tatiana, parenting was something she had always wanted, and she believed that her identity as a parent, at nineteen, had brought nothing but good outcomes, including returning to school. She regarded being a young parent as easier than being an older parent, a view commonly shared by the other young women. Her youthful age also meant that she would be a young grandparent, another positive identity for Tatiana. She believed that becoming a parent had protected her from the alternatives of being "a bit of a drunk" like her mother, and of having "dead-end" jobs, which she regarded as less fulfilling than her current career.

Well, actually, I wouldn't have gone back to school if it hadn't been for Maia, so she was the best thing for me in that way. I wouldn't be doing [my work] if I didn't go to Pumanawa; I would have probably been a bit of a drunk, like, I used to have my binges ...

I always wanted kids, so I pretty much just got what I wanted. I think being young, it's a lot easier ... from a lot of people talking to me, I think, and some have had them young and then 5 years later having had another one and then not so young, it's just not as easy, even though it's not easy. I was an older teenage parent as well, so I think I was a bit more mature ... I think some of the stuff I've experienced made me a bit more mature as well, but yeah, I don't know, like it affected me in all good ways, no bad ways ... cos it's something I've always wanted, and school was a bonus. Like I've said, I'd still be working in cafes, and here to there, um ... yeah ... I'll be a young grandparent as well, travelling here and there, and the grandkids can come with me – bugger the kids! (Laughs)

Sam was also unequivocal about her positive identity as a teenage parent.

It's changed it in every way for the best ... I wouldn't change anything for the world! I don't know where I would have ended up without him cos I was going, I wasn't quite gone, but I was going. I ran away when I was 14, we were drinking a lot! Drugs, just general nothingness things, doing nothing, not going to school ... It means I've got a career, money, I'm going somewhere! ... It makes you more mature. You grow up a lot quicker. I've changed for the better though – I've gone back and done things I should have done when I was younger.

Emma agreed that becoming a teenage parent had made her mature quickly.

It's given me a lot of stability. You have to make choices for other people and you grow up in a hurry.

I will finish this chapter with a conversation between Zena and her partner, Simon, about the effects on their lives and identities of their role as teenage parents. This couple had begun their parenting journey at the age of fifteen.

Simon:

It focused me a lot. Before, I was just drifting around and doing not much, whatever I felt like doing at the time, but it focused me a lot. I wouldn't change anything. By now, I could still be not doing anything.

Zena:

Yeah, well that's what I feel too, cos I was really naughty and never home and drinking and doing stupid stuff, and I could still be doing that now.

Simon:

Yeah, people we know, who don't have kids, are still doing that now and getting into mischief and stuff like that.

Zena:

You want to tell them to wake up. Yeah, you think more responsible.

Simon:

You still have plenty of fun. I don't think you miss out on too much.

Zena:

*I just think being a young mum doesn't stop you from doing what you want to do.
Sometimes, being a young mum you can do more than if you weren't a young mum!*

This construction of their identity as responsible young adults, whose lives have been positively transformed as a result of becoming young parents, is common not only to the young parents in this study but to many young people who have participated in qualitative research about their experiences as teenage parents.

This strongly refutes the negative findings of much quantitative research about the outcomes of teenage parenthood, and constructs this experience as an opportunity rather than a problem, provided there is adequate holistic whānau support for parent and child. The findings of my study support those of Collins (2010, p. 50) that “with appropriate resources and support, [becoming a teenage parent] can result in good outcomes for themselves and their children”.

Chapter Eight:

Concluding remarks

In this thesis, I have drawn on the life stories of ten young women in order to explore how their experiences of ‘early’ parenthood and attendance at a school for teenage parents supported the positive refashioning of their identities. All of the young women were students of Pumanawa Young Parents College at some stage between the years 2005 and 2008.

The initial impetus for the study came from my experience of observing, over a number of years, the life-changing effect of the College on the sense of self, aspirations, and future outcomes of many of its students and their children. I was interested in investigating what the young women had to say about the culture of the College, which appeared to be offering a qualitatively different ‘educational’ experience from that of the mainstream system, from which they had mostly been alienated. I also welcomed the opportunity to share the wonderful and moving stories of some of the young parents with whom I had worked, and to provide a forum for their voices to be heard within the predominantly negative research and public discourse about teenage parents.

When I retired from the role of Director of the College at the end of 2008, I felt uncomfortable about walking away with a body of knowledge and experience, built up over fifteen years of working with young parents at the College. I wanted to draw on that experience in a way which might support the work of Teen Parent Schools, as well as contributing to the wider field of education. This eased my decision to leave the College, and provided me with an enticing opportunity to follow the life stories of those former students who subsequently agreed to participate in my study.

The young women, who became my research participants, welcomed the opportunity to speak out about their experiences, and to contest the prevailing negative attitudes they had experienced as teenage parents. They shared a sense of pride in themselves and their personal achievements, and wanted to advocate on behalf of the College and other teenage parents.

I was also enthusiastic about the potential advocacy role of my research, and the opportunity it provided to represent the voices of this group of marginalised young people (Barone, 2007;

Trahar, 2006), who were widely regarded as an undesirable social problem, and whose educational and social needs had mostly been inadequately served within the conventional contexts of school and other social settings.

The context of my study

In order to better understand the social context of the young women's experiences as teenage parents, I undertook a review of the academic research on this subject, which is presented in Chapter Two. I proposed that the widespread construction of teenage parenthood as "problematic" has a number of political, historical, economic, cultural and racial factors (Daguerre & Nativel, 2006). It is also influenced by quantitative health-based research which has served to 'pathologise' teenage parenthood and its consequences (Wilson & Huntington, 2006). Because teenage parenthood is "out of time" with current normative life trajectories, it has been constructed as an unacceptable path to adulthood, a form of social deviance with negative implications of state welfare dependence, 'unfit' parenthood, and social exclusion (Bullen, et al., 2000). More recent research has challenged the causal association between teenage parenthood and poor outcomes, arguing that these result from socio-economic disadvantage rather than teenage parenthood per se (Bissell, 2000; Hotz, et al., 2005; SmithBattle, 2006; Wilson & Huntington, 2006).

In Chapter Two I also examined international educational responses to the school failure and disengagement of many teenage parents, and considered New Zealand's response in the form of Teen Parent Units, of which Pumanawa Young Parents College is one example.

Narrative methodology

My initial research question was: In what ways has the School for Teenage Parents influenced the lives of former students? In order to best answer this question, I decided to use a narrative methodological approach to gather and analyse my data. As I have discussed in Chapter Four, narrative research is a qualitative methodology which utilises the propensity of humans for story-telling, in order to access the lived experiences of participants and the meanings they give to these experiences (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006). It was my plan to structure my findings chronologically in a form of life story of each young woman, and to examine her life before, during, and after the College in order to investigate the longer term influence of the College on her life.

As my interviews with the young women progressed and I transcribed and analysed my initial data, it became apparent that one of the central themes, emerging from the data, was about identities and how these were fashioned in the many contexts of the young women's lives, in ways which either constrained or enhanced their life hopes and opportunities.

In response to this finding, my research question evolved to consider the broader question: What do young women's stories reveal about how their identities are fashioned in the many contexts of their lives? My particular research focus was refined to explore how Pumanawa Young Parents College had supported the refashioning of the identities of its students.

The connection between narrative and identities

Identity-making is a fluid process. Bruner (2002) proposed that we are constantly constructing and reconstructing our selfhood and identity according to the situations in which we find ourselves. This process is shaped by our memories of past experiences, by our "hopes and fears for the future", and by the cultural models of selfhood which are available to us (p. 64). Each of these models or life contexts - our families, schools, wider cultural and social settings - offers narrative possibilities of self which we draw upon to story our own identities. Scott Melton (1992) suggested that "it is by locating ourselves within the multiplicity of available discourses that we develop our identity" (p. 82). Or as Burr (1995) put it, "We are all in the process of claiming and resisting the identities on offer within the various prevailing discourses" (p. 76). As my study demonstrates, this is a life-long process of 'being' and 'becoming' which is strongly impacted upon by 'turning-point' experiences (Kehily, 2007, p. 5). In the case of the young women at Pumanawa College, these turning points included pregnancy, parenthood and the decision to return to school.

My findings

I decided to structure the presentation of my findings by drawing on the extended narratives of three of my participants, in which they talked about life experiences before, during and after the College. These were supported by shorter excerpts from the narratives of my other participants. It was my intention to personalise the quantitative research data about teenage parents with the lived experience of real young women. I chose this narrative presentation so as to honour the individual voices of my participants. As Chapter Five reveals, most of my young women participants experienced constraining narrative possibilities of self within the familial, schooling

and cultural contexts of their early lives. They responded to these narrative possibilities in a diversity of ways, claiming or accepting some identities, such as that of the school drop-out or failed learner, and resisting or contesting others, such as those negative social discourses about their ability to parent well because they were teenage parents. All storied their hopes and aspirations, around the time of becoming pregnant, as constrained by these “cultural models of selfhood”. Their narratives of this period in their lives included statements such as “I really had no plans” or “I wasn’t going anywhere”.

Pregnancy and parenthood acted as a turning point in the fashioning of the young women’s identities, impelling them to make significant changes in life style and choices in order to fulfil their understanding of what it means to be a “good” and responsible mother. One of the outcomes of pregnancy, for most of the young women, was their desire to return to school in order to gain qualifications, so that they could offer their children a “better life” than they themselves had experienced.

In Chapter Six, I drew on the narratives of all ten young women to consider the role of Pumanawa Young Parents College in supporting the positive refashioning of the young women’s identities, by offering them different narrative possibilities of self as successful learners, as ‘good’ parents and as valued and capable young people with hopeful futures. This empowered them to resist and reject the limiting and negative identities of society’s prevailing discourse about teenage parents, and to see beyond the constraining influence of their earlier life experiences, including school failure. Their stories of the College showed that the young women were supported to ‘blossom’ as learners, as young parents, and as young people within a safe and nurturing environment, built upon warm, respectful and affirming relationships with teachers and other members of staff.

Because the young women’s storied accounts focused so predominantly upon the importance of these relationships, I drew upon Māori theories of culturally responsive pedagogies and holistic human development to frame my analysis of the culture of the College and its role in the refashioning of its students’ identities. These theoretical and practical models propose that the academic achievements of marginalised and underachieving students are improved by the affirmation of their cultural identities, within a nurturing and responsive learning environment. Drawing on these indigenous epistemologies, I proposed that the school environment was like a

kaupapa whānau, a non-kinship family or community, which worked successfully with its students because it responded not only to their academic but also to their holistic needs for support. This learning environment was of particular importance in the lives of the young women because, in common with all new parents, they needed the enveloping support of a nurturing whānau to enable them to blossom and grow in this new identity, and to experience whānau ora or well-being as a young family (Lawson-Te Aho, 2010; Wilson & Huntington, 2006).

In Chapter Seven, I considered how the young women frame their identities ‘today’ by locating themselves within prevailing cultural constructs of ‘success’. This chapter investigated the longer term effect of the College’s narratives of identity, particularly with regard to the young women’s engagement in further education, their employment opportunities and choices, their relationships and family life. It also considered the young women’s attitudes to self, their hopes and aspirations for their futures, and their storied identities as teenage parents.

In analysing the young women’s narratives, it became apparent that, by supporting the refashioning of their identities as ‘successful learners’, as ‘good mothers’, and as worthwhile young women, the College had also supported the young women to access and locate themselves within dominant discursive constructs of success, which had previously seemed inaccessible to them. The narratives upon which the young women were now drawing, to frame their own lives and identities, included those of education as the key to success in life, as well as the individualised and autonomous, self-made success narratives of neo-liberal discourse (Allen & Osgood, 2009; Bullen, et al., 2000). The young women were able to imagine hopeful futures that bore a marked similarity to those imagined by their non-parenting, school-completing New Zealand peers. These hopeful imagined futures drew on cultural narratives of a Happy, Stable and Contented Life, characterised by the contemporary markers of successful adulthood such as full-time paid employment, home ownership, financial security and independence, and the two-income, two child family (Patterson, 2011; Patterson, et al., 2010).

Drawing on these constructs, the young women were now storying themselves as competent and successful learners, as hard-working young adults with clearly defined career paths, and as good and loving mothers, who were providing a positive and responsible role model to their children. They were all striving to achieve the normative indicators of acceptable, autonomous adulthood by becoming financially independent and self sufficient.

The one counter narrative, with which the young women continued to resist and challenge prevailing normative trajectories of success, was in their construction of their identities as young mothers, whose lives had been positively transformed by their experiences of parenting as teenagers. None of them conformed to the prevailing discursive construction of teenage parents as ‘unfit mothers’, or as welfare dependent ‘dole-bludgers’. These young mothers were manifestly responsible and caring parents, and they all viewed welfare support as a temporary step in their path to financial independence.

As I argued in the conclusion to Chapter Seven, this counter narrative of identity strongly refutes the negative findings of much quantitative research about the outcomes of teenage parenthood, and constructs this experience as a life changing opportunity rather than a problem, provided there is adequate holistic whānau support for parent and child.

The implications of these findings

Stories as ‘testimonio’

Firstly, I would argue that these findings indicate how important it is to listen to the stories of those people silenced in, and by, quantitative research findings and public discourse. It is evident, in listening to the personal stories of this group of teenage parents, that there is a significant mismatch between their stories and the negative prevailing public discourses which serve to constrain their identities and life opportunities. By presenting these stories, I have attempted not only to honour my participants as individuals rather than disembodied statistics, but also to enable their stories to function as a form of counter narrative or ‘testimonio’: “stories told by the less powerful, in a collective mode where one person’s story ‘stands in’ for many others” (Squire, 2008, p. 55). It is through the public sharing of these stories that “cultural shifts and political change” can occur (p. 55), which will benefit marginalised groups such as teenage parents.

Pumanawa Young Parents College as an educational model

I would also argue that the educational environment of Pumanawa Young Parents College, which was consciously constructed to provide a more rewarding educational experience for its students, has something to offer the ‘mainstream’ education system. In my work with young parents over many years at the College and, later, in my interviews for this study, I came to understand with some concern the extent to which they had disliked and felt alienated by their experiences of conventional schooling. For most of the young women, this was particularly true of their

experiences of high school. As te Riele (2007, p. 65) argued in her Australian study, successful alternative educational programmes have much to offer mainstream schools because, by contrast, they are student-centred and focus on building the unique strengths and capacities of their students, through the use of different pedagogical and curricula approaches.

When reflecting on their experience of the College, the young women talked about their growth in confidence; their more inclusive and less judgemental attitudes to others; the social benefits of long-term friendships made at the College; the positive transformation of their learning identities and their understanding of the importance of education for their children; their increased opportunities and self belief, and the impact of these on their life aspirations; their enhanced capacity to manage life challenges; the support and affirmation they had received as parents; and the social and educational benefits for their children.

The College was able to achieve these positive outcomes by normalising, affirming and celebrating the students' identities as teenage parents, and by supporting them to succeed academically, in a context where academic success was a normal part of the learning culture. By offering them loving and affirming relationships (whānaungatanga) within a nurturing kaupapa whānau environment, the College transformed the young women's understandings of the empowering possibilities of school, family and community, and supported the reframing of their identities as valued young women. Its holistic responsiveness to their needs enhanced their prospects of success as young women, as learners and as young parents.

This supportive, consistent and loving whānau-based culture was made more effective because the young women and children were immersed in a small and intimate learning environment, on a daily basis, for a period of three or more years. Intense, daily, long-term exposure served to normalise this culture for the young women and their children, even though it was, in many cases, very different from the cultural and discursive contexts of their homes, relationships, and wider society.

It is my hope that my study of the culture of Pumanawa Young Parents College may be helpful to teachers and teacher educators everywhere, who have an interest in improving schools and schooling experiences for teenage parents, as well as for other marginalised and underserved segments of the student population.

The transforming power of love

One of the features of the College, which distinguished it from conventional high school contexts, was the love and aroha which infused its culture. Although acknowledged in indigenous educational theories, love, or the unconditional positive regard of Rogers' (1951) person-centred counselling approach, is seldom discussed in the theories of Western pedagogies, nor often experienced by young people within the conventional schooling system. As Macfarlane et al. (1997) stated in his presentation of his own model of Māori culturally responsive pedagogies, “aroha or love in all its different aspects such as compassion, empathy, responsiveness and concern” (p. 68) is the strength and core of these pedagogical practices.

It was love that encouraged the young women to perceive themselves as valued and worthwhile young people, with something to offer to wider society; and it was the love of teachers, in both the Early Childhood Centre and the school classroom, which provided a model of good parenting practices. This expression of love, in all its different aspects, was supported by the structural features of Pumanawa such as small size (Macfarlane, et al., 2008), the presence of children at the College, the holistic and practical support for such needs as transport, health, food, counselling, housing, and income. It was the transforming power of love that supported the young women to refashion their identities as successful, regardless of how disabling or constraining their earlier experiences had been.

The College did not succeed in its work with every student

Regardless of the data presented in this study, the College did not succeed with all its students. I am unable to theorise the reasons for this lack of universal success, because this was not the experience of the young women whom I interviewed. Even the one participant, selected because, from my perspective, she had ‘dropped out’ of the College, storied its influence on her life and identities as positive. I am therefore left with my own suppositions, based upon anecdotal experiences of many years of work at the College.

It was my observation that there were a number of factors which constrained the effective work of the College in engaging and empowering all of its students to access positive identities. Some young women were simply too stressed and distracted by their life circumstances, such as controlling or violent partners, health problems, family difficulties, unstable living arrangements, unresolved issues with alcohol and drugs, or personal tragedies, to fully engage with, and

commit to, the College experience. For some, the policied constraints imposed by government funding requirements, that they attend the College full-time, were simply unrealistic and excluding. This also applied to state-imposed age constraints. For some very young mothers, so recently disengaged from the conventional school system, enrolment in any learning environment was something for which they were not yet ready. Unfortunately, if they hadn't enrolled before the age of nineteen, they were no longer eligible to attend the College, regardless of their motivation to re-engage with education. Some young women were lost to the College because of personal conflicts with other students, relating to such personal concerns as partner infidelity, or shared paternity, which made it too uncomfortable for them to attend. And there were also difficulties accommodating the second children of some parents because of the limited number of places available in the Early Childhood Centre, which created a form of unwanted but structural inequity and discrimination.

As my study reveals, some of the participants also experienced some of the above challenges whilst at the College but, for a variety of reasons, felt able to continue their enrolment. Apart from Huia, I have not interviewed other young women who 'dropped out' of the College, and this would provide fertile ground for future research.

The role of the College in positioning the young women within dominant narrative constructs of success

An unforeseen consequence of the work of the College was its ambiguous role in enabling the young women to locate themselves within prevailing discursive constructs of success, which were not fully endorsed by the College. These related particularly to the discursive construction of full-time employment, regardless of parenting identity, as the normative marker of adult independence and success. Patterson et al. (2010), in their New Zealand study of the imagined futures of students completing high school, argued that schools are "a vector for transmitting liberal ideologies" that "privilege human subjectivities of personal autonomy and taking responsibility for making the most of [one's life]" (p. 18). When I interviewed the young women in this study, they were mostly working or studying extremely hard in order to fulfil their understanding of these ideologies. I was surprised to learn that the College, which constructed itself as an alternative to mainstream educational contexts, may have unwittingly reinforced these neo-liberal values.

The College consciously encouraged the young women to make choices in their lives. For some, those future choices included the desire to be ‘stay-at-home’ mothers. The classroom teachers, who were all parents of young children in the time frame of my study, had chosen part-time rather than full-time employment, and modelled this as a preferred choice. However, their middle class status with partners who were earning secure incomes, made this choice more accessible than it was to the young women, who were at a different stage in their life trajectories of early adulthood and financial security. As indicated in my reflective memo in Chapter Seven, I was greatly relieved to learn that Andy had recently chosen to reduce her full-time hours of employment, so as to be able to spend more time with her children, whom she felt were not thriving in their after-school programmes. This indicated that she was reassessing her attempts to balance the often conflicting demands of parenting and employment. I would be interested to have the opportunity to undertake a second follow-up study with the same young women, in five or so years, to ascertain how they were resolving these apparently conflicting identity claims.

Regardless of this personal dilemma, it was my observation that, rather than having been disadvantaged by early parenthood, the young women in my study were mostly managing to keep pace with their non-parenting peers in their life trajectories towards financial independence and security. This appeared to have resulted from the opportunities offered by their re-engagement with education, and from their own hard work, which enabled them to construct themselves as successful within prevailing dominant narratives.

Celebration of diversity

Whilst the findings of my study confirm that teenage parenthood has been a life-changing opportunity for the young women I interviewed, it is important to acknowledge the challenges and loneliness experienced by many teenage (and older) mothers, in a society which appears to place less value on the identity of motherhood than on that of career and income earning capacity (Allen & Osgood, 2009; Wilson & Huntington, 2006). As my study contends, motherhood has become a classed construct, supporting the choice of wealthier women to be stay-at-home mothers, whilst denigrating the same choice of ‘working class’ women as irresponsible. The pressure on young mothers, to work in paid employment, is very strong. Many also lack the support of families because their own parents are still engaged in full-time employment. Because of these social and demographic changes over recent decades, familial and community support

for young families is often limited and has to be provided instead by community agencies. These are some of the reasons why the work of the College was so important and potentially life-changing. As Wilson and Huntington (2006, p. 70) argued in their New Zealand study, the provision of support, rather than stigmatisation, is a more compassionate and effective response to society's widespread concern about teenage motherhood.

I would like to end this study by arguing for the capacity of a humane and caring society to embrace and celebrate diversity, in this case the diversity of non-normative parenthood; and to appreciate the underlying commonality of each person's identity as a human being, who needs loving support and affirmation in order to thrive and develop to her full potential.

Ka whangaia, ka tupu, ka puawai

That which is nurtured, blossoms and grows (Whakatauki, cited by Turia, 2012)

Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical approval letter

Human Ethics Committee

Tel: +64 3 364 2241, Fax: +64 3 364 2856, Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz



Ref: HEC 2009/65/CoEdn

23 October 2009

Jenny Hindin Miller
117 Grahams Road
Burnside
CHRISTCHURCH

Dear Jenny

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "The influence of a teen parent unit on the lives of its students" has been granted ethical approval.


Please note that should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dr Missy Morton'.

 Dr Missy Morton
Chair
Educational Research HEC

"Please note that Ethical Approval and/or Clearance relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research."

University of Canterbury Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand. www.canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix B: Information sheets and consent forms



Dear (former student)

I am currently enrolled as a PhD student at the College of Education, Canterbury University. My research will look at how the experiences of past students of the Teen Parent Unit have influenced their lives and the lives of their children. I plan to interview in some depth approximately 8 – 10 young parents who have attended the Teen Parent Unit, as well as several members of the teaching staff, including early childhood teachers, classroom teachers and a previous social worker. I may also use newsletters, photographs, letters from previous students, and so on, in my study.

My research will be in two parts. The first will comprise the stories of the young parents whom I interview and the second will involve a study of the Unit between the years 2005 and 2008.

I am writing to invite you to participate in this research, as a past student of the Unit. I would like to interview you about your life experiences, including your experiences as a student of _____ and the influence you feel these experiences have had on your life and on the life of your child. The interviews will take at least one hour and I may need to interview you on several occasions to enable you to fully tell your story. Interviews will be held at a place and time that are convenient to you. These interviews will be recorded with your permission and you are welcome to bring a support person with you, if you wish.

I am enclosing an Information Sheet, with more details about the study, which I would really like you to read, and a Consent Form for you to sign if you agree to participate. Your participation is voluntary and if you do not wish to participate, or wish to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no disadvantage to you. The confidentiality of all participants in my study will be protected, and you and the Teen Parent Unit will not be identified in the study. This research has the ethical approval of the Canterbury University Ethical Approval Committee.

I would welcome any questions about the research that you would like to ask and can be contacted on ph. 364 2987 or email jmh32@student.canterbury.ac.nz. My Supervisor, Professor Niki Davis can be contacted on ph. 364 2987 x 44246 or email niki.davis@canterbury.ac.nz

I will contact you again soon.

Kind regards,

Jenny Hindin Miller

1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury, College of Education, Ethical Approval Committee.
2. Complaints may be addressed to:
Dr Missy Morton
Chair
Ethical Approval Committee
College of Education, University of Education
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH
Telephone: 345 8312

Information Sheet for Participants

Teen Parent Units: How have the lives of teenage parents and their children been influenced by their experiences at a teen parent unit?

What is the study about and why is it important?

Teen Parent Units have been operating in New Zealand in one form or another since 1994. To date there has been no research into their influence on the lives of their students. The aim of this research is to look at this question from the perspective of a number of young parents who attended a Teen Parent Unit between 2005 and 2008, as well as several staff members from that Unit and family members.

The questions shaping the research are based around how young parents perceive their education, health, parenting, social skills, relationships, attitudes and employment prospects to have been influenced by their experiences as students of the Teen Parent Unit and how they feel their children's education, health and social skills have been influenced. Questions will also consider those aspects of the culture and practices of the Unit that the young parents feel were supportive or unsupportive of their learning and development.

It is intended that the results of this study will be helpful to all Teen Parent Units in New Zealand and will be of interest to educators both here and overseas, as well as to anyone working with young parents and their children. Because the study will tell the stories of young parents and give expression to their voices, this will enrich the research on teenage parents, which is dominated by the views of academics and health professionals. It may also counteract some of the ill-informed and negative stereotyping of teenage parents.

Inviting past students and their families to participate in interviews

The researcher, Jenny Hindin Miller, is studying for her PhD at the College of Education, University of Canterbury. She is inviting you to participate in this research because you are a former student of a Teen Parent Unit. Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary. If you agree to be interviewed, she will meet you at a time and place that is convenient for you. Interviews will take about one hour. Because of the time and emotional commitment that may be involved, it is important that you feel you have the support of family as well as Jenny during the interview process. You are also welcome to bring support person/s with you to the interviews. If the interviews bring up memories which are upsetting for you, you may wish to access free counselling which has been prearranged through the Rata Counselling Service. On all matters that have a cultural component, Jenny will also be seeking the advice of Maori and Pasifika representatives. These steps are being taken because your welfare as a research participant is paramount at all times.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed and you will be able to see and check the transcripts. The results of the study may be submitted for publication to national or international journals or presented at educational conferences. You will be given a copy of either the full

report or a summary of the findings of the study and may at any time ask for additional information or results from the study.

You have the right to withdraw from the project at any time. If you choose to withdraw, Jenny will use her best endeavours to remove any of the information provided by you from the project, including any final publication, provided that this remains practically achievable.

How will your privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

All information from participant interviews will be securely stored by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet at the University and in protected computer files. Participants' names and the name of the Teen Parent Unit will not be revealed in any of the research findings, or in reports and articles that will be written about this research. Instead, agreed substitute names will be used. Only Jenny, her supervisors, and her transcription assistant will have access to the personal identifying details of participants in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study. All other research data will be securely stored for 5 years before being destroyed.

Disclosure of safety issues

If it becomes apparent during the interviews that your safety, your children's safety, or the safety of others is at risk, Jenny will undertake the following:

1. Discuss her concerns with you.
2. Discuss her concerns with her Supervisors.
3. Contact additional agencies if this is considered to be necessary.

What do you do if you wish to ask questions or find out more about the study?

This project has been reviewed and approved by Jenny's supervisors, Professor Niki Davis, Associate Professors Judith Duncan and Judi Miller and by the Canterbury University, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions regarding the study please contact Jenny on 364 2987 or by email jmh32@uclive.ac.nz or Professor Davis, email niki.davis@canterbury.ac.nz or phone 364 2987 x 44246.

If you have any concerns or complaints about the processes used, please contact Dr Missy Morton, Chairperson of the University of Canterbury, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, Telephone: 345 8312.

Consent Form for Participants

Teen Parent Units: How have the lives of teenage parents and their children been influenced by their experiences at a teen parent unit?

I have read the Information Form concerning this study and understood what it is about. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I can ask for more information at any time.

I know that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time.
2. My name and that of my school will be kept confidential and no identifying details will be included in any presentations or published material.
3. The interview will be recorded and I can ask that the recording be stopped temporarily or permanently at any time. I can also request a copy of the interview transcript to check its accuracy and make changes as I see fit.
4. My responses will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University and in a secure computer file for the duration of the period involved in this research. All identifying details will be destroyed at the end of the study. All other material will be securely stored for 5 years before being destroyed.
5. The findings of this research will be presented at conferences and written up in academic journals.
6. This study involves informal discussion and questioning where the precise nature of the questions (or what is discussed) has not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. In the event that the line of questioning develops in a way that makes me feel hesitant or uncomfortable, I can decline to answer any questions and may withdraw from the study without any disadvantage to myself.
7. Reasonable precautions have been taken to protect data transmitted by email but the security of the information cannot be guaranteed.
8. If I raise safety issues regarding myself, my children or other people during the interviews, the researcher will first discuss these with me, then with her supervisors. Additional agencies may be contacted.

I agree / do not agree to take part in this study.

Signed.....Date.....

Name (Please print).....

This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. Complaints may be addressed to:

Dr Missy Morton
Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH
Telephone: DDI 345 8312

Permission Form

I _____ give permission to Jenny Hindin Miller to access any of my school records that will be of use for her PhD research, including my Record of Achievement and my Personal Evaluation Forms, from Young Parents College.

Date _____

Signed _____

Dear (Principal and BOT of the TPU Host School)

As you are aware I am currently enrolled as a PhD student at the College of Education, Canterbury University. My research will investigate how the experiences of teenage parents as past students of the Teen Parent Unit have influenced their lives and the lives of their children. I plan to interview approximately 8 – 10 past students of the Teen Parent Unit in some depth, as well as several members of the teaching staff, including an early childhood teacher, a classroom teacher and a previous social worker. I may also use focus groups of past students and of staff to further clarify my research question, as well as some document analysis, including newsletters, photographs, letters from past students, and other relevant material.

My research will be in two parts. The first will comprise the stories of the young parents whom I interview and the second will involve a case study of the Unit between the years 2005 and 2008. I have already spoken with _____ (the current Director), informing her of the focus and goals of my research, and she is supportive of my study.

I am writing to you as the Principal and Board of Trustees of the Teen Parent Unit to seek your support and permission to proceed with my study. For your information I am enclosing an Information Sheet about the study, and a Consent Form for you to sign to indicate if you consent or do not consent to my interviewing several members of the Unit's staff, as well as undertaking document analysis. The confidentiality of all participants in my study will be protected, and the Teen Parent Unit and the Host School will not be named in any presentations or publications. This research has the ethical approval of the Canterbury University Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

Despite New Zealand's high number of teenage pregnancies, there is a dearth of research into the effects of education and support on the lives of teenage parents and their children. It is my hope that this study will benefit teenage parents by enabling their voices to be heard in the research literature, which is dominated by health professionals and academics. I also hope that this study will be of interest to educators, specifically to Teen Parent Units and their Host Schools, and that it may also have relevance for other educational institutions. My research will cast light on the broader life circumstances of teenage parents, and will challenge negative societal attitudes and stereotyping of this vulnerable group of young people.

I would be very happy to share my findings and information from recent research about teenage pregnancy and parenting with members of the school's staff, if this would be of interest to you.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my research with you in more detail, should you require it. I can be contacted on ph. 364 2987 or email jmh32@student.canterbury.ac.nz.

My Supervisor, Professor Niki Davis can be contacted on ph. 364 2987 x 44246 or email niki.davis@canterbury.ac.nz .

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Hindin Miller

1. This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.
2. Complaints may be addressed to:
Dr Missy Morton
Chair
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
College of Education, University of Education
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH
Telephone: 345 8312

Information Sheet for the Teen Parent Unit's Board of Trustees and the Early Learning Centre's Management Team



Teen Parent Units: How have the lives of teenage parents and their children been influenced by their experiences at a teen parent unit?

What is the study about and why is it important?

Teen Parent Units have been operating in New Zealand in one form or another since 1994. To date there has been no research into their influence on the lives of their students. The aim of this research is to look at this question from the perspective of a number of young parents who attended the Teen Parent Unit between 2005 and 2008, as well as several staff members from the Unit and its attached Early Learning Centre.

The questions shaping the research are based around how young parents perceive their education, health, parenting, social skills, relationships, attitudes and employment prospects to have been influenced by their experiences as students of the Teen Parent Unit and how they feel their children's education, health and social skills have been influenced. Questions will also consider those aspects of the culture and practices of the Unit that the young parents feel were supportive or unsupportive of their learning and development.

It is intended that the results of this study will be helpful to all Teen Parent Units in New Zealand and will be of interest to educators both here and overseas, as well as to anyone working with young parents and their children. Because the study will tell the stories of young parents and give expression to their voices, this will enrich the research on teenage parents, which is dominated by the perspectives of academics and health professionals. It may also counteract some of the ill-informed and negative stereotyping of teenage parents.

Inviting past students and staff members to participate in interviews

The researcher, Jenny Hindin Miller, is studying for her PhD at the College of Education, University of Canterbury. She is seeking your consent as the governing bodies of the Teen Parent Unit and its attached Early Learning Centre to enable her to interview a small selection of staff members of the Teen Parent Unit and its Early Learning Centre and to view relevant documentation for her research. Students and staff will be interviewed about their understanding of how students' experiences of the Teen Parent Unit have influenced their lives and the lives of their children. Questions will explore aspects of the culture and practices of the Unit and Early Learning Centre in the timeframe 2005 to 2008, as well as the personal stories of the young parents. Participation in the research is entirely voluntary.

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed and participants will be able to see and check the transcripts. Themes from the interviews will also be sent to them to check for accuracy and for additional comments that they may wish to make. The results of the study may be submitted for publication to national or international journals or presented at educational conferences.

Participants will be given a copy of either the full report or a summary of the findings of the study and may at any time ask for additional information or results from the study. Participants are invited to bring support persons to the interviews if they wish because of the emotional commitment involved on their part. Jenny has also arranged for free counselling through the Rata Counselling Service if the interview process brings up any distressing memories with which participants would like counselling support. On all matters that have a cultural component, Jenny will also be seeking the advice of Maori and Pasifika representatives. These steps are being taken because the welfare of research participants is paramount at all times.

Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time, should they wish. If they choose to withdraw, Jenny will use her best endeavours to remove any of the information relating to them from the project, including any final publication, provided that this remains practically achievable.

How will privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

All information from participant interviews will be securely stored by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Canterbury and in protected computer files. Participants' names and the name of the Teen Parent Unit, its host school and Early Learning Centre will not be revealed in any of the research findings, or in reports and articles that will be written about this research. Instead, agreed substitute names will be used. Only the researcher, her supervisors, and her transcription assistant will have access to the personal identifying details of participants in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study. All other research data will be securely stored for 5 years before being destroyed.

Disclosure of safety issues

If it becomes apparent during the interviews that the safety of the participant, his/her children, or others is at risk, Jenny will undertake the following:

1. Discuss her concerns with the participant.
2. Discuss her concerns with her Supervisors.
3. Contact additional agencies if this is considered to be necessary.

What do you do if you wish to ask questions or find out more about the study?

This project has been reviewed and approved by Jenny's supervisors, Professor Niki Davis, Associate Professors Judith Duncan and Judi Miller and by the Canterbury University, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions regarding the study please contact Jenny on 364 2987 or by email jmh32@student.canterbury.ac.nz , or Professor Davis, email niki.davis@canterbury.ac.nz or phone 364 2987 x 44246. If you have any concerns or complaints about the processes used please contact Dr Missy Morton, Chairperson of the University of Canterbury, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, Telephone: 345 8312.

Consent Form for the Board of Trustees of the Teen Parent Unit's host school



Teen Parent Units: How have the lives of teenage parents and their children been influenced by their experiences at a teen parent unit?

We have read the Information Form concerning this study and understood what it is about. Our questions have been answered to our satisfaction and we understand that we can ask for more information at any time.

We know that:

1. Participation in the study by Teen Parent Unit staff and past students is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time.
2. The names of participants and of the Teen Parent Unit and its host school will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed or used in any published material.
3. Participants have agreed to the interview being recorded. They know that they can ask that the recording be stopped temporarily or permanently and that they can request a copy of the interview transcript to check its accuracy and make changes as they see fit.
4. Any data gathered in the study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Canterbury and in a secure computer file for the duration of the period involved in this research. All identifying details will be destroyed at the end of the study. All other material will be securely stored for 5 years before being destroyed.
5. The findings of this research will be presented at conferences and written up in academic journals with identifying materials removed.
6. This study involves informal discussion and questioning where the precise nature of the questions (or what is discussed) has not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that participants feel hesitant or uncomfortable, they can decline to answer any questions and may withdraw from the study without any disadvantage to themselves.
7. Reasonable precautions have been taken to protect data transmitted by email. However the security of the information cannot be guaranteed.
8. If participants raise issues regarding their own, their children's, or other people's safety during the interviews, the researcher will first discuss these with them, then with her supervisors. Additional agencies may be contacted.

We agree / do not agree that members of the Teen Parent Unit staff may be invited to take part in this study. We also agree / do not agree to relevant documentation like school newsletters and photos being used for analysis in the study.

Signed.....Date.....

Name (Please print).....

This project has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. Complaints may be addressed to:

Dr Missy Morton
Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
College of Education, University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800, CHRISTCHURCH
Telephone: DDI 345 8312

Appendix C: Interview schedules

Interview Schedule for 2 or 3 interviews with young parents

Research Question: In what ways have young parents' experiences as past students of the Teen Parent Unit influenced their lives and the lives of their children?

How do these young parents perceive their own education, health, parenting, social skills, relationships and employment prospects to have been influenced by their experiences as students of the Teen Parent Unit? How do they perceive the education, health and social skills of their children to have been influenced? Can education and support positively impact the negative outcomes, described in the research literature, for teenage parents and their children? What aspects of the culture of the TPU are supportive or not supportive of students' learning and development?

Before the recorded interview begins, I will have gone over the Information Sheet and the Consent Form with the participant, explaining the purpose of my research, and answering any questions she may have about the research and the interview process. At some point in the process I will also gather demographic information from her on the following:

Age; Age of child/ren; Age at first becoming pregnant; Age at birth of child/ren; Years of secondary education before attending the TPU; Family circumstances inc. parental circs, parents' education levels, occupations, marital status, siblings and their circs; Partner details inc. age, relationship to child/ren, educational level, occupation; Age at first attending TPU, length of time enrolled at TPU, educational level achieved; Present age, educational level, occupation, living circumstances – with whom, etc.

I will also have included the following preamble to the interview:

We have known each other for some time in our roles as director and as student of the Teen Parent Unit. We are now beginning a new phase of our relationship: as researcher and research participant – or as 'conversational partners' - in this research journey. In this new relationship I am really interested in hearing about your experiences and understandings and am totally open to whatever you want to say, without judgement on my part. There are no right or wrong answers and I am here to learn from you and to listen to what you have to tell me. I want you to feel completely comfortable to say whatever you think and feel without concern about what I might think. I also don't want you to try and please me with your answers. I just want to hear your views and experiences in your own words.

Interview One and Two:

Enrolment and reasons around this decision

Circumstances of the young person's life at the time of enrolment – finding out that you were pregnant and how this was for you. How did you feel about yourself at this time? What did you imagine yourself doing in your future? Your hopes and aspirations?

What were those early days as a student at the TPU like for you? What helped/supported you to feel part of the school? What was difficult?

Likes and dislikes about the TPU

Memories that stand out and what it was about these experiences that made them memorable – vignettes to trigger memories

Strengths and weaknesses of the TPU

Looking back on the experience, what things would you say supported your learning and development? What things were not supportive? What made you want to be there?

Relationships with members of staff – tell me about a relationship that was important to you. What was special about this relationship? What did you learn from it? What influence do you think it had on you?

How did the TPU differ from your previous school? How was it similar?

How did you feel you were regarded as teenage parents at the TPU? How was this expressed? How did this affect you?

How successful or unsuccessful do you think the TPU was at meeting your needs? Probes: Parenting? Personal development? Health needs? Support? Relationships? Goals? Cultural needs? Creative needs?

How much influence do you think you had or could have had on what happened at the TPU?

I want you to think about structures, rules and boundaries at the TPU. Can you name some examples? How did these compare with mainstream school? What effect do you think they had on you?

What would you say are the 'must have' ingredients that make a TPU work?

Things that have stayed with you from the TPU experience: things you learned, achieved, attitudes and beliefs, parenting practices, aspects of personal development

How did you feel about leaving the TPU? What was the hardest part for you?

When you left the TPU what was your self-image like? What were your hopes and aspirations? Your plans for the future?

What are you doing in your life now? Education? Work? Relationships? Living circumstances?

In what ways would you say the TPU experience has influenced you as a person? Has influenced your life choices? What would someone close to you say in answer to this question? If there had been no TPU, what do you think your life would have turned out like?

Looking back over your life how do you feel about who you are today – as a person? A parent? Your achievements? Your hopes and aspirations? Your plans for the future?

Child/ren's experiences of the TPU and its influence on their lives

To finish off, if you had to pick some words that described the TPU and its culture, what would these words be? Tell me more about each word. Give me some examples.

Interview Three:

This interview is about your childhood, so that I have a context for your other interviews.

Tell me who the members of your family were/are? What position are you in the family?

With whom did/do you have the closest relationship?

Tell me about your mother and your relationship with her? Your father and your relationship with him.

Tell me some standout memories from your childhood? What is it about these memories that makes them stand out?

What words would you use to describe your family life?

What are some feelings associated with childhood?

What about school?

How would you describe yourself as a child? What did other people – your parents – say about you?

How would you describe yourself now?

Do you think your parents are/would be proud of you today?

In what ways has being a teenage parent changed your life? What have you learned from this experience? Skills? Attitudes? How do you feel about this?

Appendix D: Vision Statement of the School for Teenage Parents

Statement of Vision (Hindin-Miller, 2006b)

Our vision at _____ Young Parents College and Early Learning Centre is to positively transform the lives of our young parents and their children by providing education and support in a well-organised, structured, caring and supportive school environment.

The Young Parents College was established to enable teenage and young parents to continue with their education in a supportive whānau-centered environment. The Early Learning Centre was set up on site to provide quality early childhood care and education to the children of our young parents and to enable the young parents to access ongoing education without being ‘separated’ from their children.

Each young parent has an individual education plan based on previous school achievements, learning needs and identified goals and aspirations. The development of a range of core skills underpins the IEPs. In addition to academic learning, a balanced programme to support physical, social, emotional and spiritual well-being is offered. A strong emphasis is placed on positive and loving parenting, healthy life-styles, the development of co-operative social group skills and personal development. Social work support is always available and all staff members are encouraged to support our young parents and their children’s growth and development in a safe, enthusiastic, caring environment.

The Young Parents College is committed to encouraging a love of learning which, it is hoped, will benefit both parents and children and continue long after students leave our school. Every effort is made to support each leaver in her transition to further study and to the workplace. We acknowledge the inherent qualities and uniqueness of each student, and her potential for educational achievement and personal transformation, when supported in a loving and structured learning nest.

It is our goal to support our students and their children to achieve successful, happy and independent lives.

Reference List

- Absolum, M. (2006). *Clarity in the classroom: Using formative assessment , building learning-focussed relationships*. Auckland: Hodder Education.
- . Age-related infertility. (2009) Retrieved 30 June 2009, from www.gloss.co.nz/parenting/fertility/age-related-infertility.html
- Allen, K., & Osgood, J. (2009). Young women negotiating maternal subjectivities: The significance of social class. *Studies in the maternal*, 1(2), 1-17.
- Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Amin, R., Browne, D., Ahmed, J., & Sato, T. (2006). A study of an alternative school for pregnant and/or parenting teens: Quantitative and qualitative evidence. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 23, 172-195.
- Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (2008). *Doing narrative research*. London: Sage.
- Anyon, J. (2009). *Theory and educational research: Toward critical social explanation* (First ed.). New York & London: Routledge.
- Banks, H. (2008). *Young mothers speak out: Young Pakeha women's experiences of motherhood*. Unpublished master's thesis, Waikato, Hamilton.
- Baragwanath, S. (1997). The education of teenage mothers in New Zealand: A policy vacuum and a practical example of assistance. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand / Te Puna Whakaaro*, November(9), 98-105.
- Barone, T. (2007). A return to the gold standard? Questioning the future of narrative construction as educational research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, May(13), 454-470.
- Bell, J. (1999). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Bishop, R. (2003). Changing power relations in education: Kaupapa Māori messages for 'mainstream' education in Aotearoa/New Zealand [1]. *Comparative Education*, 39(2), 221-238.
- Bishop, R., & Berryman, M. (2006). *Culture speaks: Cultural relationships and classroom learning*. Wellington: Huia.
- Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy, L. (2009). Te Kotahitanga: Addressing educational disparities facing Maori students in New Zealand. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 734-742.
- Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (2003). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. London: Zed Books.
- Bissell, M. (2000). Socio-economic outcomes of teen pregnancy and parenthood: A review of the literature. *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 9(3), 191-204.
- Boden, R., Kenway, J., & Epstein, D. (2005). *Getting started on research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education*. (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Borland, K. (1991). "That's not what I said": Interpretive conflict in oral narrative research. In S. B. Gluck & D. Patai (Eds.), *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history* (pp. 63-75). New York: Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

- Breheny, M., & Stephens, C. (2007a). Individual responsibility and social constraint: The construction of adolescent motherhood in social science research. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 9(4), 333-346.
- Breheny, M., & Stephens, C. (2007b). Irreconcilable differences: Health professionals' constructions of adolescence and motherhood. *Social Science & Medicine*, 64, 112-124.
- Breiding-Buss, H., & Young, J. (2007). *The research case for involving young men in young parents services*. Paper presented at the Youth Health Conference, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2001). The bioecological theory of human development. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences*. (Vol. 10, pp. 6963-6970). New York: Elsevier.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Brosh, J., Weigel, D., & Evans, W. (2007). Pregnant and parenting adolescents' perception of sources and supports in relation to educational goals. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 24, 565-578.
- Bruner, J. S. (2002). *Making stories: Law, literature, life* (1st ed.). New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Bullen, E., Kenway, J., & Hey, V. (2000). New Labour, social exclusion, and educational risk-management: The case of 'gym-slip mums'. *British Educational Research Journal*, 26(4), 441-456.
- Burdell, P. (1995). Teen mothers in high school: Tracking their curriculum. *Review of Research in Education*, 21, 163-208.

- Burgess, H., Sieminski, S., & Arthur, L. (2006). *Achieving your doctorate in education*. London: Sage Publications.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J., & Davies, B. (2008). *Judith Butler in conversation: Analyzing the texts and talk of everyday life*. New York: Routledge.
- Carlisle, A., & Gibbs, R. (2008). Best practices for promoting student achievement in teen parent units. Auckland: Ministry of Education.
- Casey, K. (1992). Why do progressive women activists leave teaching? Theory, methodology and politics in life-history research. In I. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying teachers' lives* (pp. 187-208). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Charteris, J. (2005). E-learning for two generations: A case study of how ICTs can support learning at a teen parent centre. Gisborne.
- Cheng, D. (2011, 15 August). Govt move to refocus drop-outs 'overdue', *NZ Herald*.
- Cherrington, J., & Breheny, M. (2005). Politicizing dominant discursive constructions about teenage pregnancy: Re-locating the subject as social. *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, 9(1), 89-111.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research* (First ed.). San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data*. London: Sage Publications.
- Collins, B. (2005). *Missing voices: Teenage pregnancy and social policy*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington.
- Collins, B. (2010). Resilience in teenage mothers: A follow-up study. Wellington: Ministry of Social Development.

- Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (2006). Asking questions, sharing stories and identity construction: Sociocultural issues in narrative research. In S. Trahar (Ed.), *Narrative research on learning: comparative and international perspectives*. Oxford: Symposium Books.
- Cotterill, P., & Letherby, G. (1993). Weaving stories: Personal auto/biographies in feminist research. *Sociology*, 27(1), 67-79.
- Cram, F. (1997). Developing partnerships in research: Pakeha researchers and Maori research. *Sites*, 35(Spring), 44-63.
- Cram, F. (2001). Rangahau Maori: Tona tika, tona pono - The validity and integrity of Maori research. In M. Tolich (Ed.), *Research Ethics in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Concepts, Practice, Critique*. Auckland: Longman.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Cubey, P. (2009). Case study: The Hawke's Bay School for Teen Parents and The Colenso Early Childhood Centre. Wellington.
- Cullen, J. (2005). The ethics of research in educational settings. In P. Adams, K. Vossler & C. Scrivens (Eds.), *Teachers' work in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 252-261). Southbank, Victoria: Thomson Dunmore Press.
- Daguerre, A., & Nativel, C. E. (Eds.). (2006). *When children become parents. Welfare state responses to teenage pregnancy*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Davidson, C., & Tolich, M. (1999). *Social science research in New Zealand: Many paths to understanding*. Auckland: Pearson Education New Zealand Ltd.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (Third ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Collier Books.

- Dickson, N., Sporle, A., Rimene, C., & Paul, C. (2000). Pregnancies among New Zealand teenagers: Current status and international comparisons. *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 113(1112), 241-245.
- Douglas, L., Roberts, A., & Thompson, R. (1988). *Oral History*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Dressman, M. (2008). *Using social theory in educational research: A practical guide*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Du Plessis, R., Higgins, J., & Mortlock, B. (2004). Narrative, community organizations and pedagogy. In P. Chamberlayne, J. Bornat & U. Apitzsch (Eds.), *Biographical methods and professional practice: An international perspective*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Ducker, B. (2007). Chalk talk - overcoming the hurdles: Title IX and equal educational attainment for pregnant and parenting students. *Journal of Law and Education*, 36(3), 445-452.
- Duncan, J. (2008). *Restructuring lives: Kindergarten teachers and education reforms, 1984-1996*. Koln: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Durie, M. (1998). *Whaiora : Maori health development* (2nd ed.). Auckland: Oxford University Press.
- Durie, M. (2001). *Mauri ora: The dynamics of Maori health*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Durie, M. (2002). *Nga Kahui Pou: Launching Maori futures*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Education Review Office. (February 2007). *Teen Parent Units: An evaluation*. Wellington: Education Review Office.
- Fergusson, D. M., & Woodward, L. (2000). Teenage pregnancy and female educational underachievement: A prospective study of a New Zealand birth cohort. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62(1), 147.

- Fine, M., & Asch, A. (1988). *Women with disabilities: Essays in psychology, culture, and politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Foucault, M., & Gordon, C. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Fox, C. (2006). Stories within stories: Dissolving the boundaries in narrative research and analysis. In S. Trahar (Ed.), *Narrative research on learning: Comparative and international perspectives* (2006 ed., pp. 280). Oxford: Symposium Books.
- Fraser, S. (2006). *The role of support in the lives of adolescent mothers*. Unpublished master's thesis, Massey University, Auckland.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Goodson, I. F. (Ed.). (1992). *Studying teachers' lives* (First ed.). New York and London: Teachers College Press.
- Goodson, I. F. (Ed.). (2008). *Investigating the teacher's life and work* (First ed. Vol. 1). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Goodson, I. F., & Walker, R. (1991). *Biography, identity and schooling: Episodes in educational research*. London: Falmer Press.

- Gray, J. (1998). *Narrative inquiry*. Unpublished paper. Edith Cowan University, Western Australia.
- Gudmundsdottir, S. (1996). The teller, the tale, and the one being told: The narrative nature of the research interview. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 26(3), 293-306.
- Gutschlag, A. (2007). Some implications of the Te Kotahitanga model of teacher positioning. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, 4(1), 3-10.
- Hallman, H. L. (2007). Reassigning the identity of the pregnant and parenting student. *American Secondary Education*, 36(1), 80-98.
- Harris, M. B., & Franklin, C. (2009). Helping adolescent mothers to achieve in school: An evaluation of the Taking Charge group intervention *Children & Schools*, 31(1), 27-34.
- Harrison, L., Shacklock, G., Angwin, J., & Kamp, A. (2004). "At school I am just like everyone else": Teenage pregnancy, schooling and educational outcomes. Paper presented at the Learning from the Margins Conference, Melbourne, Australia.
- Hill, N. (2005). Education: A young mother's hope. *Social Work Review*, 17(1), 38-48.
- Hindin-Miller, J. (2006a, October). *Protecting vulnerable families: How education and support can change lives*. Paper presented at the Margaret Stevenson Memorial Dinner and Lecture, Auckland.
- Hindin-Miller, J. (2006b). *Strategic Plan Vision*. Karanga Mai Young Parents College.
- Hindin-Miller, J. (2010a). *From high school drop-out to high school achiever: What teenage parents have to say about the influence of a teen parent school on their lives and aspirations*. Paper presented at the International Symposium on Classroom Research, University of Canterbury, New Zealand.
- Hindin-Miller, J. (2010b). "I think I would have been a complete write-off": What teenage parents have to say about the influence of education and parenting on their changing identities. Paper presented at the NZARE Conference, Auckland, New Zealand.

- Hoffman, S. D., & Maynard, R. A. (Eds.). (1997). *Kids having kids: Economic costs and social consequences*. Washington: Urban Institute Press.
- Hosie, A. (2002). *Teenage pregnancy in young women of school age: An exploration of disengagement and re-engagement from the education system*. Paper presented at the Society for the Study of Social Problems, Chicago.
- Hotz, V. J., McElroy, S. W., & Sanders, S. G. (2005). Teenage childbearing and its life cycle consequences: Exploiting a natural experiment. *Journal of Human Resources*, 40(3), 683-715.
- Hunter, C. (2007). On the outskirts of education: The liminal space of rural teen pregnancy. *Ethnography and Education*, 2(1), 75-92.
- Johnson, R., & Denny, S. J. (2007). *The health and wellbeing of secondary school students attending Teen Parent Units in New Zealand*. Auckland: University of Auckland, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences.
- Josselson, R. (2011). Narrative research: Constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing story. In F. J. Wertz, K. Charmaz, L. McMullen, R. Josselson, R. Anderson & E. McSpadden (Eds.), *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*. New York: Guilford Publications Inc.
- Kehily, M. J. (Ed.). (2007). *Understanding youth: Perspectives, identities and practices*. London ; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Kelly, D. (2003). Practicing democracy in the margins of school: The teenage parents program as feminist counterpublic. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(1), 123-146.
- Kilpatrick, S., Barrett, M., & Jones, T. (2003). *Defining learning communities*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education, Auckland.

- Kozulin, A., Gindis, B., Ageyev, V., & Miller, S. (2009). Socio-cultural theory and education: Students, teachers, and knowledge. In A. Kozulin, B. Gindis, V. Ageyev & S. Miller (Eds.), *Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context*: Cambridge University Press.
- Lall, M. (2007). Exclusion from school: Teenage pregnancy and the denial of education. *Sex Education*, 7(3), 219-237.
- Lawson-Te Aho, K. (2010). Definitions of whanau: A review of selected literature. Wellington: Families Commission.
- Lenihan, H. (2003). *From teen rebel to good mother: Young women's experiences of motherhood*. Unpublished master's thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington.
- Lesko, N. (2001). *Act your age!: A cultural construction of adolescence*. New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Levinson, B. A., Foley, D. E., & Holland, D. C. (1996). *The cultural production of the educated person: Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Lips-Wiersma, M. (1999). Caitlin's career journey: A reflection on self and New Zealand society. In N. Monin, J. Monin & R. Walker (Eds.), *Narratives of business and society: Differing New Zealand voices* (pp. 154-161). Auckland: Longman.
- Lynch, J., Rivers, M., & O'Regan, M. (1999). Report to the Crime Prevention Unit: Evaluation of four teen parent education support youth at risk demonstration projects. Wellington: Crime Prevention Unit.
- Macfarlane, A. (1997). The Hikairo Rationale teaching students with emotional and behavioural difficulties: A bicultural approach. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 3, 153-168.
- Macfarlane, A., Glynn, T., Cavanagh, T., & Bateman, S. (2007). Creating culturally-safe schools for Maori students. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 36, 65-76.

- Macfarlane, A., Glynn, T., Waiariki, G., Penetito, W., & Bateman, S. (2008). Indigenous epistemology in a national curriculum framework? *Ethnicities*, 8(1), 102-127.
- Macfarlane, A., & New Zealand Council for Educational Research. (2004). *Kia hiwa ra! Listen to culture: Maori students' plea to educators*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- Macfarlane, A., & New Zealand Council for Educational Research. (2007). *Discipline, democracy, and diversity: Working with students with behaviour difficulties*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After virtue: A study in moral theory*. London: Duckworth.
- Madhavan, S., & Thomas, K. J. A. (2005). Childbearing and schooling: New evidence from South Africa. *Comparative Education Review*, 49(4).
- Martis, R. (2004). *Effective teenage antenatal education: A developmental approach*. Paper presented at the Parents Centre Conference, New Plymouth.
- Maynard, M., & Purvis, J. (1994). *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective*. London & Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.
- Mercer, N. (1991). Researching common knowledge: Studying the content and context of educational discourse. In G. Walford (Ed.), *Doing educational research*. London: Routledge.
- Middleton, S. (1993). *Educating feminists: Life histories and pedagogy*. New York: Teachers' College Press, Columbia University.
- Milne-Home, J., Power, A., & Dennis, B. (1996). Pregnant futures: Barriers to employment, education and training amongst pregnant and parenting adolescents. Canberra.
- Ministry of Education. (2004). *Education Circular: Teen Parent Units (TPUs) attached to secondary schools*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

- Ministry of Education. (2008). *Ka Hikitia-Managing for success: The Maori Education Strategy 2008-2012*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education. (2009). *Te Whariki: He Whāriki Matauranga mo nga Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Youth Affairs. (1998). Report on access to education for teenage mothers and fathers. Wellington: Ministry of Youth Affairs in conjunction with the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- Ministry of Youth Development. (2011). Teenage pregnancy Retrieved 13 September, 2011, from <http://www.myd.govt.nz/policy-and-research/teenage-pregnancy.html>
- Moffitt, T. E. (2002). Teenaged mothers in contemporary Britain. *Journal Child Psychology & Psychiatry*, 43, 727-742.
- Mutch, C. (2005). *Doing educational research: A practitioner's guide to getting started*. Wellington: NZCER Press.
- Nayak, A., & Kehily, M. J. (2008). *Gender, youth and culture: Young masculinities and feminities*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Neimeyer, R. A. (1998). Social Constructionism in the counselling context. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 11(2), 135-149.
- Paki, P. (2002). *"What about my education?" A teenage mum's perspective on how her educational needs can be best supported*. Unpublished master's thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North.
- Patterson, L. (2011). *Tracks to adulthood. Post-school experiences of 21 year-olds: The qualitative component of Competent Learners @20*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Patterson, L., Forbes, K., Peace, R., & Campbell, B. (2010). Headlines & heartlines: Young New Zealand mothers imagine family, friends and relationships across their life-course. Wellington: Massey University.

- Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Payne, J. (2005). *The lived experience of 'being pregnant' for women under the age of nineteen*. Unpublished master's thesis, AUT, Auckland.
- Phoenix, A. (2008). Analysing narrative contexts. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing narrative research*. London: Sage.
- Plummer, K. (2001). *Documents of life 2: An invitation to a critical humanism* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Poelzleitner, M. (2007). An assessment of the social support context at Whakatipuria Teen Parent Unit. Palmerston North: Massey University.
- Pogarsky, G., Thornberry, T. P., & Lizotte, A. J. (2006). Developmental outcomes for children of young mothers. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(2), 332-344.
- Popov, L. K., Popov, D., & Kavelin, J. (2006). *Virtues Reflection Cards*. Vancouver: The Virtues Project.
- Rawiri, C. (2007). *Adolescent Maori mothers experiences with social support during pregnancy, birth and motherhood and their participation in education*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Waikato, Hamilton.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008a). Concluding comments. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing narrative research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008b). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Ripple, R. (1994). Intergenerational education: Breaking the downward achievement spiral of teen mothers. *Clearing House*, 67(3), 143-145.
- Rivers, M., O'Regan, M., & Lynch, J. (1997a). Schedule A: Project requirements schedule: Crime Prevention Unit.

- Rivers, M., O'Regan, M., & Lynch, J. (1997b). *Teen Parent Education Support Youth at Risk Demonstration Project: Evaluation Proposal*. Wellington.
- Rogers, C. (1951). *Client-centered Therapy: Its current practice, implications and theory*. London: Constable.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rogoff, B., Turkkanis, C. G., & Bartlett, L. (2001). *Learning together: Children and adults in a school community*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rouch, G. (2009). *Low-skilled, low socio-economic, young, co-resident, working fathers: Their experience of fatherhood*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Massey University, Palmerston North.
- Roxas, K. (2008). Keepin' it real and relevant: Providing a culturally responsive education to pregnant and parenting teens. *Multicultural education*, 15(3), 2-9.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Salmon, P., & Riessman, C. (2008). Looking back on narrative research: An exchange. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing narrative research*. London: Sage.
- Save the Children. (2004). State of the world's mothers: Children having children Retrieved 30 June, 2009, from <http://www.savethechildren.org/mothers/report-2004/images/pdf/SOWM-2004-final.pdf>
- Scholl, M. (2007). Educating adolescent parents: Proactive approaches by school leaders. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 73(3), 28-32.
- Scott Melton, V. (1992). Co-habitation as marriage resistance? A feminist deconstruction. *Sites*, 24(Autumn), 79-98.

- Seitz, V., & Apfel, N. H. (1999). Effective interventions for adolescent mothers. *Clinical Psychology: Science & Practice*, 6(1), 50.
- Skeggs, B. (1994). Situating the production of feminist ethnography. In M. Maynard & J. Purvis (Eds.), *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective*. (pp. 72-92). London: Taylor & Francis Ltd.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous people*. London: Zed Books.
- SmithBattle, L. (2000). The vulnerabilities of teenage mothers: Challenging prevailing assumptions. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 23(1), 29-40.
- SmithBattle, L. (2006). Helping teen mothers succeed. *The Journal of School Nursing* 22(3), 130-135.
- Somekh, B., & Lewin, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (1st ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Squire, C. (2008). Experience-centred and culturally-oriented approaches to narrative. In M. Andrews, C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing narrative research*. London: Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (2003). Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies in qualitative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Statistics NZ. (2003). Teenage fertility in New Zealand Retrieved 30 June 2009, from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/Articles/teen-Sep03.htm>
- Taylor, M. L. M. (2002). *Teenage mothers' continued education. A study of adolescent mothers' perceptions of the influences that challenge and encourage them when choosing to continue their education in a teen parent unit*. Unpublished master's thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North.
- te Riele, K. (2007). Educational alternatives for marginalised youth. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 34(3), 53-68.

- The Personal Narratives Group, & Barbre, J. W. (Eds.). (1989). *Interpreting women's lives: Feminist theory and personal narratives*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- The Universal House of Justice. (2000). *The Ridvan message*. Haifa: The Universal House of Justice.
- Thomson, R. (2007). A biographical perspective. In M. J. Kehily (Ed.), *Understanding youth: Perspectives, identities and practices*. London: Sage Publications in association with The Open University.
- Tolich, M. (Ed.). (2002). *Research ethics in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Concepts, practice, critique*. Auckland: Longman.
- Trahar, S. (Ed.). (2006). *Narrative research on learning: Comparative and international perspectives*. (1st ed.). Oxford: Symposium Books.
- Turia, T. (2012, 15 May). Time for whanau to take a leading role, *Wanganui Chronicle*.
- UNICEF. (2001). A league table of teenage births in rich nations. *Innocenti Report Card* Retrieved 2 October, 2012, from www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/repcard3e.pdf
- Watson, S. (2006). The stories people tell: Teaching narrative research methodology and analysis. In S. Trahar (Ed.), *Narrative research on learning: comparative and international perspectives*. Oxford: Symposium Books.
- Wilkinson, R. G., & Pickett, K. (2009). *The spirit level: Why more equal societies almost always do better*. London: Allen Lane.
- Williams, S., McGee, R., Olaman, S., & Knight, R. (1997). Level of education, age of bearing children and mental health of women. *Social Science Medical Journal*, 45(6), 827-836.
- Wilson, H., & Huntington, A. (2006). Deviant (m)others: The construction of teenage motherhood in contemporary discourse. *The Journal of Social Policy*, 35(1), 59-76.
- Woodward, L. (2003). There is no evidence that primary prevention programmes reduce unintended teenage pregnancies. *Evidence-based Healthcare*, 7(1), 8-9.

- Woodward, L., Fergusson, D. M., & Horwood, L. J. (2001). Risk factors and life processes associated with teenage pregnancy: Results of a prospective study from birth to 20 years. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63(4), 1170 - 1183.
- Woodward, L., Friesen, M., Horwood, J., & Fergusson, D. (2009). *Developmental timing of parenthood and adult partnership and parenting outcomes*. Paper presented at the Society of Research in Child Development, Denver.
- Woodward, L., Horwood, L. J., & Fergusson, D. M. (2001). Teenage pregnancy: Cause for concern. *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 114(1135), 301-303.
- Wylie, S. (2009). Meeting the needs of teen parents and their children: Promising practices. Christchurch: Waipuna Youth Social Services.
- Youdell, D. (2006). *Impossible bodies, impossible selves: Exclusions and student subjectivities*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Youdell, D. (2011). *School trouble: Identity, power and politics in education*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Zachry, E. (2005). Getting my education: Teen mothers' experiences in school before and after motherhood. *Teachers College Record*, 107(12), 2566-2598.